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from EMI and Virgin Classics

Spotlight release



Steve Reich: Different Trains

The London Steve Reich Ensemble

EMI celebrates the 75th birthday of one of today's most acclaimed contemporary composers with a release featuring his popular Grammy-Award-winning *Different Trains* for string quartet and tape as well as *Triple Quartet* and the world-premiere recording of *Piano Counterpoint*, a new arrangement for piano and electronic tape of *Six Pianos*. In *Different Trains*, inspired by Reich's childhood journeys across America and informed by more ominous train journeys taking place in wartime Europe during the same years, he uses train sounds and speech samples from his former governess and Holocaust survivors. The performers are the composer-endorsed London Steve Reich Ensemble.

Also new this month



Mozart: String Quartets
Quatuor Ebène

After their award-winning Virgin Classics debut CD of Debussy, Ravel and Fauré, a Brahms programme and the pop-jazz *Fiction*, the Ebène Quartet turn to two of Mozart's *Haydn Quartets* KV 421 and 465, and the *Divertimento* KV 138.



Fauré: Complete Chamber Music
Various Artists

Chamber works spanning the career of Gabriel Fauré, the influential composer who bridged the Romantic and Modern era in French music, are performed by a superlative line-up of French and French-trained musicians.



Vivaldi: Farnace
Max Emanuel Cencic

The world premiere of Farnace in the version prepared by Vivaldi for the city of Ferrara in 1737-38 but never performed until now. Max Emanuel Cencic leads a magnificent cast in "a work bursting with riches."



Fauré: Requiem
Philippe Jaroussky, Paavo Järvi

L'Orchestre de Paris and its Music Director Paavo Järvi bring together Fauré's *Requiem*, *Cantique de Jean Racine*, *Elégie*, *Pavane* and *Super flumina Babylonis*. Philippe Jaroussky and Matthias Goerne are the featured soloists.



JS Bach: Piano Concertos
Alexandre Tharaud

Tharaud follows his dazzling Scarlatti album with another fusion of modern and historically informed performance, this time partnered by the dynamic period-instrument ensemble Les Violons du Roy. Tharaud plays all four solo parts in BWV 1065.



Gluck: Ezio
Il Complesso Barocco, Alan Curtis

Alan Curtis, "one of the great scholar-musicians of recent times" (*The New York Times*), conducts a brilliant cast including Max-Emanuel Cencic in the original 1750 version of "perhaps the finest of Gluck's pre-Orfeo operas."

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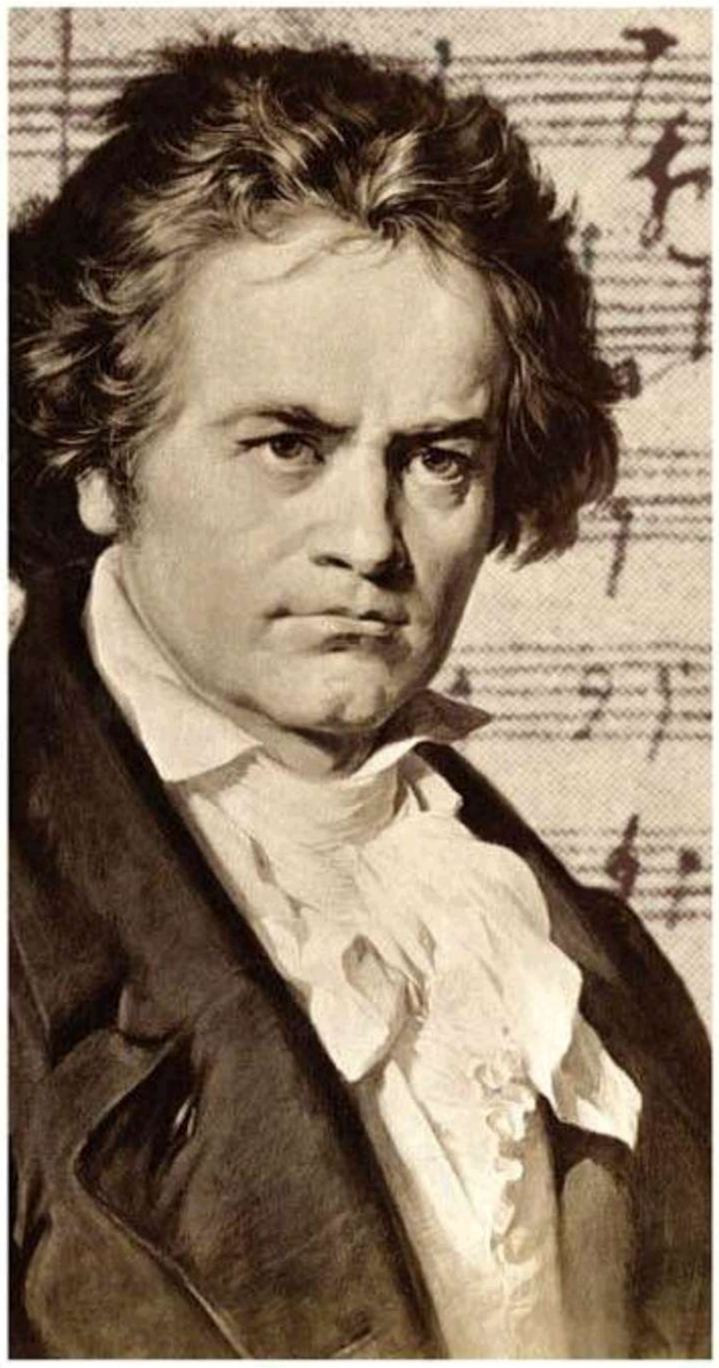
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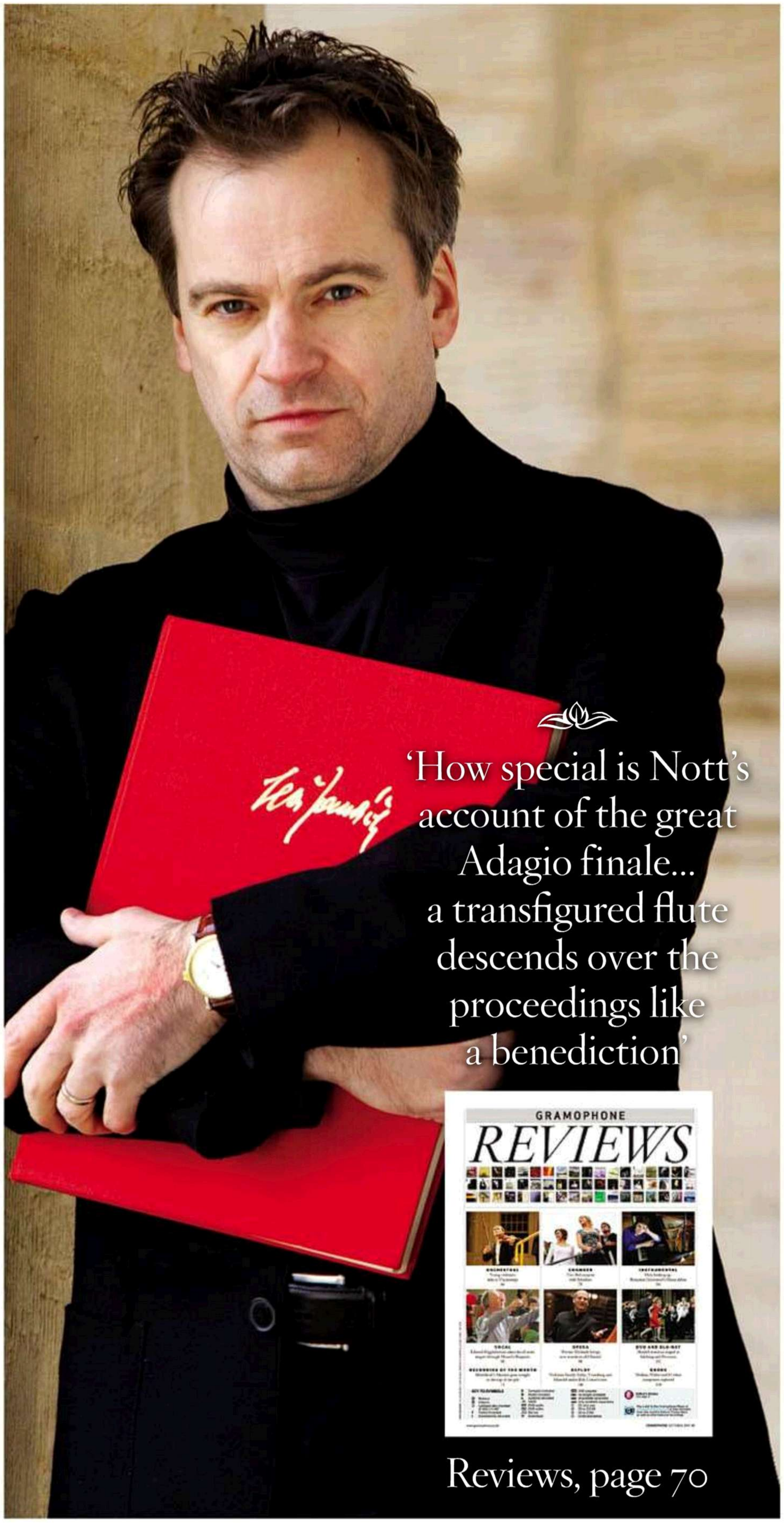
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THE GRAMOPHONE AWARDS
Gramophone's panel of critics examine in detail the nominations in each category for this year's Awards

THE MENOTTI CENTENARY
To mark 100 years since Gian Carlo Menotti's birth, *Gramophone* considers his life, works and legacy, and looks at recommended recordings of his music



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an·tic·i·pa·tion ***(an-tis-uh-pey-shuhn):*** **the act of anticipating; expectation, premonition, or foresight.** ***e.g: music*** **Compare suspension an unstressed, usually short note introduced before a downbeat and harmonically related to the chord immediately following it.**

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Our Contributors



This issue's diarist **SARAH CONNOLLY** is one of the world's leading mezzo-sopranos and, as of last year, a CBE. She writes about the challenge and privilege of tackling the great song repertoire, an area she has made her own.



Regular *Gramophone* reviewer **ANDREW ACHENBACH** jumped at the chance to write a Collection on Dvořák's Fifth Symphony: "Since my teens, its melodic genius has never failed to activate the goosebumps."



A long-time critic for *Gramophone*, **HARRIET SMITH** is a prolific writer, editor and broadcaster (on music and, her other passion, gardening). She is a programme editor for this season's Proms.

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EDITORIAL

GRAMOPHONE

Founded in 1923 by Sir Compton Mackenzie and Christopher Stone as 'an organ of candid opinion for the numerous possessors of gramophones'

Nine symphonies, centuries of change



On April 2, 1800, Beethoven premiered the first of his symphonies. Twenty-four years, one month and five days later he conducted his ninth. From those nine works, everything changed. Everything? Pretty much. The sense of what music could be, what its span could encompass, these concepts Beethoven had created anew. And he had, perhaps above all, established a new focal point for music. Composers for centuries afterwards would, consciously or not, internalise and process what Beethoven had accomplished and the German's voice would become entwined with their own. Artists would measure themselves against this locus of the symphonies, their admirers (and critics) assessing their standing in the world through, amongst other things, their performances of "the Nine".

All of which, of course, still goes on. The *Gramophone* office was abuzz some weeks ago because a hitherto somewhat underrated conductor, Emmanuel Krivine, had delivered a superb set of the Beethoven symphonies. It is abuzz again as I write this, because Riccardo Chailly's long-awaited set has just arrived. For a major conductor to wait until his late fifties to set down his interpretation of these works is unusual. But such is the esteem in which Chailly is held that, despite the vast competition, it is a fair bet he has something unique to say.

> 'Riccardo Chailly and Philip Clark pin down the lines of influences from Beethoven to the composers who followed. You will be surprised.'

His recording will be reviewed next issue, but for this issue's fascinating cover story (and to heighten the anticipation), Chailly and *Gramophone* writer Philip Clark attempt to pin down the lines of influence from Beethoven to the composers who followed, in every sense. I think you will be surprised at some of their conclusions.

A quick word, unusually I grant, about this issue's *One To Watch* (our young artist showcase). I first heard the Ukrainian violinist Valeriy Sokolov several years ago at an EMI sales conference. He achieved the uncommon feat of rendering Saint-Saëns almost frighteningly intense. Sokolov has bided his time until he felt ready and now his first big concerto recording is set to be released. He could be something truly special.





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Notes & Letters

The search for Brian • Malcolm Arnold's Cello Concerto • The 'Nazi' debate rumbles on...

Poor productions

I am grateful to Richard Lawrence (August, page 91) for shedding some light on the diabolical *Don Giovanni* production from Glyndebourne Touring Opera that I attended last autumn. It could have been Spain that was portrayed but I was quite unaware that the Franco era was intended. I am still at a loss to know why there were rough slabs of tarmac piled up for the graveyard scene, which reappeared at the end with the Don's dining table on top of them. I am also intrigued that with a fairly contemporary production it was necessary to have "period" instruments in the pit. A clash of ideas, surely.

The trouble with so many current productions is that you need a guided tour beforehand in order to understand what is supposed to be going on. I know many operas tolerably well; goodness know what first-timers make of them. Could anyone honestly have followed last year's *Aida* at Bregenz without a guidebook? Frequently there is an explanation in the programme but you really need this well before the performance in order to study the facts with time and good lighting, neither of which is normally available in the auditorium.

I am not sure that many productions merit preservation on DVD, although there are certainly some. I am glad that operas are still available on CD so one can hear the singing and the orchestra, and then summon up in one's mind any production one prefers at the time.

John Harington Hawes
via e-mail



Arnold: should his original Cello Concerto be recorded?

LETTER OF THE MONTH

What's in a name?

The welcome attention Havergal Brian is receiving through Martyn Brabbins's Proms performance of the *Gothic* Symphony prompted a memory from my student days in Leicester in the very early Seventies. In those days I think the only advocates for Brian's work on LP were the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, either with their principal conductor Eric Pinkett or their guest James Loughran, newly appointed to the Hallé. I used to spend most Saturday afternoons in the Leicester Record Library and recall one occasion when the phone rang and I overheard the young and obviously inexperienced assistant fielding the call with some mystification. In the end she put her hand over the mouthpiece and asked her colleague: "Do we have any music by Have-a-go Brian?"

Hywel Jenkins
Glastonbury, Somerset, UK



Symphony of a Thousand: the Gothic in rehearsal

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Please send letters for publication in the Awards issue by September 12..

PRESTO CLASSICAL

Arnold original

It's good to have a recording of Malcolm Arnold's Cello Concerto ("Shakespearean Cello Concerto", it says on the score) which seemed to be a forgotten work (Session Report, August, page 44). I've heard a recording of the premiere performance of this revision by David Ellis and it's certainly a worthwhile addition to the Arnold canon but it seems a pity not to have a recording of the original version. Having seen the score and had the effect of it described to me (I missed its only performance), I feel it's a very different kind of work. It has massive orchestral *tuttis* and a ferociously stark mood. David Ellis has added a lot of detail, some of which fills apparent gaps in the score but which overall makes it a much lighter piece. The additions make it more palatable – and make it a work that is more likely to be performed, so we can be very grateful to him – but they aren't like real late Arnold. Other late works (especially the Ninth Symphony) that seemed empty and a bit tragic at first have proved to work, for all their oddity. The Naxos disc will be a treasure but we need to hear the rough-and-ready original.

Andrew Baker
Staffordshire Library & Information Service, Stafford, UK

British birthdays

Musical anniversaries come and go, some with a little more notice than others. Last year and this have seen the tercentenaries of two of the greatest native-born English composers, Thomas Arne and William Boyce, but few record labels, including Chandos and Hyperion, seem to have noticed. A second recording of *Artaxerxes* was welcome but we still await first CD recordings of *Comus*, *The Judgement of Paris*, *Alfred*, *Thomas and Sally* and *Judith*, while the majority of Boyce's sacred music, overtures and Odes remain unrecorded. The doggerel of the Odes has been commented on but surely it's no worse than that for

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Purcell's? In the last half of this year it would be gratifying to hear the hidden works of these composers committed to disc.
Stephen Butterworth
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, UK

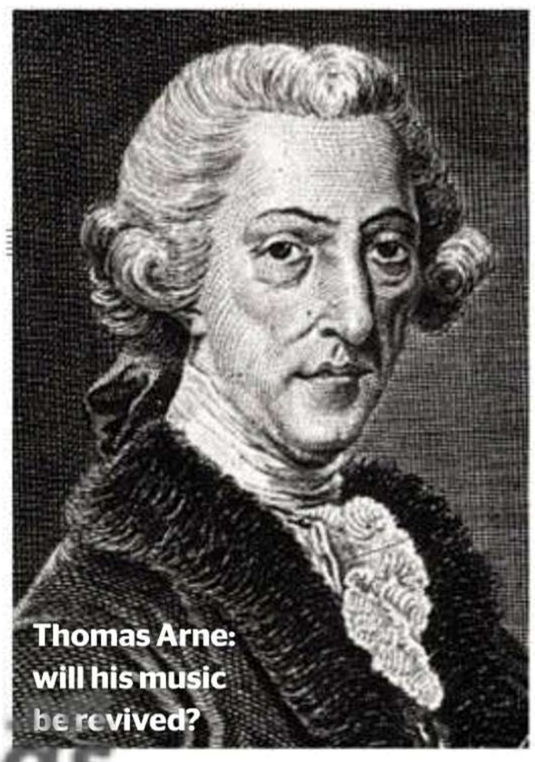
Ney and the Nazis

I go some of the way with Tully Potter (Letters, September) but I get off at a difficult stop. Nazi Germany was in one sense run by a media dictatorship and any public event, even if not directly staged to benefit the regime, could be spun and presented as if it had been. The clips of Furtwängler conducting in factories and, in the Ninth Symphony, in a swastika-bedecked hall are eloquent, though one wonders whether the editing uses images from other halls, too, or has worked attentive and photogenic extras into a rehearsal to get the faces and the religious concentration. Any public personality could be press-ganged into these events, whether or not they viewed themselves as Nazis. They were all part of the drive Goebbels never abandoned, to confer legitimacy on a party which had impressed a desperate middle class enough to win its votes and now demanded its support, even unto death.

But what bothers me is something else. In Germany doing National Service I heard Elly Ney play twice. At the time I had no idea who she was. She gave two memorable Brahms performances, one in the D minor Concerto, the second in the E minor Cello Sonata with Ludwig Hoelscher. On both occasions the encore was "Träumerei". What struck me was the immense affection in which the audiences held her, in both Mönchengladbach and Baden-Baden, and how profoundly they responded to "Träumerei". And we know that that very piece had been a battleground between the extreme right of the 1920s, who saw it as an example of pure (German) inspiration, and the Second Viennese School, who argued that, whether or not it was inspired, its thematic construction could be analysed, and did so.

Elly Ney was, in fact, by the end of the 1930s one of the musicians who most actively promoted the Nazi cause. It was suggested she had been Hitler's favourite pianist; but there were other candidates, including – so Klemperer thought, and put it to him when they played together in London in the 1960s – Backhaus (Klemperer was disarmed by Backhaus's simple response – he couldn't say that he was Hitler's favourite pianist, but "He did like my playing very much"). She had the reputation, post-war, of having been an active anti-Semite, and some German towns, including Bonn, banned her. She had been a Leschetizky pupil.

It used to be the fashion, particularly in America in the 1950s, to claim that features of style in certain German artists' playing were typically Nazi, including wide tempo variations within a single movement, *allargandos*, exaggerated climaxes – anything Toscanini didn't do. I never quite saw this. Did Elly Ney, when she played Brahms or recorded Strauss's *Burleske*, think of the Nazi regime, or of Leschetizky's teaching? Moiseiwitsch once said he thought of Leschetizky every day of his career. Are we to suppose that Elly Ney did not, even when her playing was at its worst – not Nazi at all, but just bad? Her late Beethoven concerto discs offer evidence of how bad it could be.
Jim Brennan
via e-mail



Thomas Arne: will his music be revived?



Elly Ney: 'Nazi' playing or just bad?

Key question

John Hunt (Letter of the Month, August) triumphantly quotes a prominent young German conductor who rhetorically asked: "What has C sharp minor got to do with fascism?" He was right – music has absolutely nothing to do with it. It is, however, the wrong question. The right one should have been: "What has fascism got to do with C sharp minor?" What drove fascism to forbid a certain category of musicians, composers, conductors and singers to make a single note of music in public? Why were they silenced, prosecuted, driven into exile or murdered? Just to make room for artists such as Elisabeth Schwarzkopf who hadn't anything to fear as long as they feigned to know nothing of what was happening to their colleagues?
Lex Plompen
The Hague, Netherlands

Stuttgart Seasons

Surely the recording that opened the floodgates on the interest in Vivaldi's music in the early 1950s (Collection, August, page 46) was that of *The Four Seasons* by the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra under Karl Münchinger. It had widespread distribution both in the UK and the USA. The Kaufmann/Swoboda version came a little earlier but it had limited release on the Concert Hall label – Concert Hall was a record club.

Also, Peter Quantrill (page 78) overlooked the recording of *Das Lied von der Erde* issued by EMI with the alto part sung by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, with tenor Murray Dickie and the Philharmonia under Paul Kletzki. It is a more significant version with Fischer-Dieskau than the recent DG release.
John Holmes
via e-mail

Scratch that

The remark of Beecham's to the lady cello player (Letters, May) took place in Brisbane, Australia, when he was on tour during the war. The already very provincial Queensland Symphony Orchestra was missing many of its main players owning to the men being in the armed forces and it had made up numbers with whoever was available. Beecham obviously found one of its weaker points.
Colin Jones
South Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Editorial note

In the obituary of Giorgio Tozzi (August, page 10) we attributed conductorship of the Gobbi/Christoff studio recording of *Simon Boccanegra* to Nello Santi rather than Gabriele Santini.

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THE EARL OF HAREWOOD
Writer and administrator
Born February 7, 1923
Died July 11, 2011

Lord Harewood was managing director of Sadler's Wells Opera and the company that grew out of it, English National Opera – London's English-language opera house – from 1972 until 1985. He was also editor of *Kobbé's Complete Opera Book* – for many the model of clarity and informed opinion when it comes to the operatic repertoire – and founding editor of *Opera* magazine.

The grandson of King George V, Lord Harewood, born George Lascelles, made a break with aristocratic tradition and devoted his life to the arts. After Eton he joined the Grenadier Guards and after war service he went up to Cambridge, where he was approached by Benjamin Britten to become president of the Aldeburgh Festival: a career in the musical world beckoned.

In 1950 he founded *Opera* and, as the result of a critical review of *Kobbé's Guide to the Opera*, he was asked to assume editorship of the book, a role he maintained for 30 years. During the 1950s he worked as chief executive David Webster's right-hand man at Covent Garden, where he was instrumental in many of the company's great artistic triumphs. He was also involved in the commissioning and premiere of Britten's *Gloriana*, the hostile reception of which upset him greatly. Harewood was artistic director of the Leeds Festival (1958-64), the Edinburgh Festival (1961-65) and the Adelaide Festival in 1988. But it was his work in opera for which he is best remembered. In 1972, shortly after the Sadler's Wells Opera took up residence at the Coliseum in St Martin's Lane, its managing director, Stephen Arlen, died suddenly and Harewood was asked to take his place. This he did and created a company that has provided serious competition to the Royal Opera ever since with its innovative programming and staging. During Harewood's tenure, it staged a *Ring* cycle (now available on Chandos), many of the Janáček operas under Charles Mackerras, and the Mafia-style *Rigoletto* in Jonathan Miller's much-loved production. He appointed Mark Elder as the company's music director in 1980, ushering in an extraordinary period of artistic excellence, invariably alongside stage director David Pountney.

After he stood down as managing director he remained involved with ENO as its chairman until 1995. From 1985 he served as chairman of the British Board of Film Classification and his signature adorned the pre-screening film certificate for many years. Outside of music, Lord Harewood's many interests included art (he amassed a magnificent collection of paintings and sculpture), football (he was president of the English Football Association and of Leeds United Football Club), dance and poetry.

Lord Harewood never claimed to be anything other than a discerning listener. The title of his autobiography, *Tongs and Bones* (1981), drew its title from Bottom's line in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "I have a reasonably good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and bones." **James Jolly**



CORNELL MacNEIL
Baritone
Born September 24, 1922
Died July 15, 2011

And so, of the long tradition of great American Verdi baritones, only one remains. Lawrence Tibbett, Leonard Warren, Robert Merrill and now Cornell MacNeil are no longer with us. Sherrill Milnes is the only one still extant, and long may he continue. Milnes, though, retired some years ago and, despite the good offices of Thomas Hampson (whose baritone has never really suited the Italian composer), America still awaits their successor. MacNeil, who has died at the age of 88, exhibited all the hallmarks of that tradition – a broad, muscular voice that was yet burnished and smooth (at least until the acid of time corroded it), coupled with long-breathed *legato*.

The son of a Minneapolis singer (his mother) and a dentist father, MacNeil's early public appearances included a speaking role, as the backstage announcer at Radio City Music Hall. As the *New York Times* relates, "It was his sonorous baritone that announced the news to Radio City audiences of both the German and Japanese surrenders." But MacNeil, who studied with the great Wagnerian baritone Friedrich Schorr, had an important opera debut in 1950, in the leading role in Menotti's hugely successful *The Consul*. After a glittering start to his glamorous career, he joined New York City Opera and then, in 1959, the Metropolitan Opera.

Both those debuts were in Verdi roles, Germont and Rigoletto respectively, and it was Verdi and to a lesser extent Puccini that would define his career (his toad-like Scarpia can be seen in at least two filmed stage *Tosca* productions – one, with Luciano Pavarotti and Shirley Verrett, recently issued by Decca and another, alongside Hildegard Behrens and Plácido Domingo, on DG). His recordings, some live, some unofficial, captured many of his most popular roles, though sadly his Rigoletto is on a surprisingly flawed EMI set conducted by Francesco Molinari-Pradelli, where everyone sounds below their best. If you can find it, he is better heard in the role on a 1962 Decca recording for Nino Sanzogno.

Perhaps his finest hour on record is his Jack Rance in Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* for Decca and Franco Capuana, of which Edward Greenfield has noted approvingly in *Gramophone*, "Cornell MacNeil gives Jack Rance an apt element of nobility, making him far more than a Wild West Scarpia". Sadly, on the famous Franco Zeffirelli film of *La traviata*, MacNeil's Germont is imposing of presence but caught too late vocally.

Wisely, MacNeil largely stuck to the repertoire he was born for. Although he once told a television interviewer that the one big new role he'd love to take on was Wagner's Hans Sachs, he stayed away from such voice-wrecking adventures. In so doing, he enjoyed a long career with the Met as his base and cemented his place in American opera history. **James Inverne**

PHOTOGRAPHY: HAREWOOD HOUSE TRUST, TULLY POTTER COLLECTION

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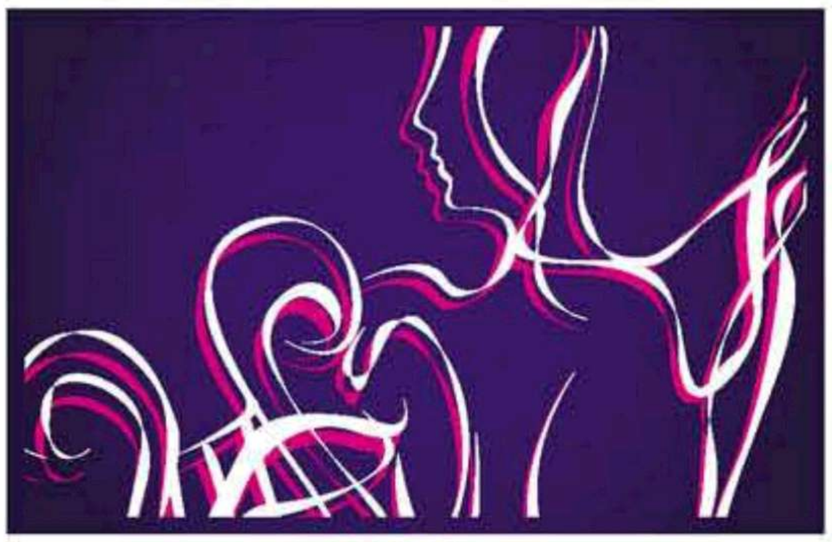
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COMING NEXT MONTH

GRAMOPHONE



IN ASSOCIATION WITH
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GRAMOPHONE CLASSICAL MUSIC AWARDS 2011

AWARDS 2011

The world's most prestigious classical music awards return. It's that time of year again when we all contemplate with wonder the superb standard of recording over the past 12 months – and *Gramophone* names the best of the best. Last year's winners included the likes of Alfred Brendel, Joyce DiDonato and Antonio Pappano.

Our highest honour, Recording of the Year, last year went to a recording of works by Byrd from The Cardinall's Musick – the disc sold out within hours of the announcement. Who will take the plaudits and the gongs this year? Which great recordings should you put on your must-hear list? To find out, don't miss the next issue.

ON SALE OCTOBER 7

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JUDITH WEIR



Choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge
Geoffrey Webber *director*
Matthew Fletcher and Annie Lydford *organ*
DCD34095

In the first recording devoted entirely to Judith Weir's choral music, the Choir of Gonville & Caius explores her evolving relationship with the medium, from her earliest liturgical commission to the most recent, which was premièred in 2009. Also included in this comprehensive collection are several secular pieces and her two organ works, which are now established classics of the repertoire. The athleticism, intensity and clarity that are hallmarks of the choir's singing are ideally suited to Weir's strikingly original, approachable and fascinating music.

'glittering precision … marvellous choral sheen'
— International Record Review, June 2009

DELPHIAN



Songbook
The Trebles of Tewkesbury Abbey Schola Cantorum
Benjamin Nicholas *director*
Helen Porter *piano*
Carleton Etherington *organ*
DCD34097

BBC Chorister of the Year (2009) Laurence Kilsby heads up this fascinating programme of music by Richard Rodney Bennett, Leonard Bernstein, Gabriel Jackson, James MacMillan, Arvo Pärt and Vaughan Williams among others. The boys, from Dean Close Preparatory School in Cheltenham, respond with vital commitment.

'The trebles splendidly vindicate the tradition that places them at the heart of English cathedral music'
— Gramophone, April 2009



The Shadow Side
Contemporary Song From Scotland
Irene Drummond *soprano* Iain Burnside *piano*
DCD34099

For many years Irene Drummond has been the leading exponent of contemporary song in Scotland. With her partner Iain Burnside — peerless in this music — she offers a fascinating snapshot of her repertoire on this recording. From the rarified sparseness of James MacMillan, to the sustained luminosity of Paul Mealor, and the emotionally charged dramatic outbursts of John McLeod, The Shadow Side explores a world of half-lights and visceral intensity.

'Irene Drummond, one of Scotland's most attractive exponents of the contemporary repertoire'
— The Scotsman

'Burnside's delightfully poetic pianism proves irresistible'
— Classic FM Magazine



Revenge of the Folksingers
Alasdair Roberts, Olivia Chaney, Mairi Campbell, Jim Moray
Concerto Caledonia, David McGuinness
DCD34108

Another hallmark collaboration, this album was created by Concerto Caledonia and guests during a week's residency in the Suffolk countryside at Aldeburgh. Traditional and original songs are interspersed with old and new tunes from Scotland, all informed by the group's magpie diversity and by Britten's folksong arrangements, which they found in Aldeburgh's library. The resulting alchemy of nu-folk with an early music sensibility defies categorisation.

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Editor's Choice

James Inverne's pick of this month's outstanding new discs – hear excerpts online

All of this month's Editor's Choice recordings can be streamed free at the online *Gramophone* Player. You can also tune in to our series of podcasts. These include interviews with *Gramophone*'s reviewers – among them Bryce Morrison, Adrian Edwards and Richard Fairman – about the short-listed recordings in the run-up to the Awards announcement itself. Also on the Player this month, hear excerpts from Tori Amos's "Night of Hunters" (see My Music, page 138). And, to coincide with our feature on the viola in this issue, you can hear Bach from *Gramophone* Award-winning soloist Maxim Rysanov (below). All at **www.gramophone.co.uk**





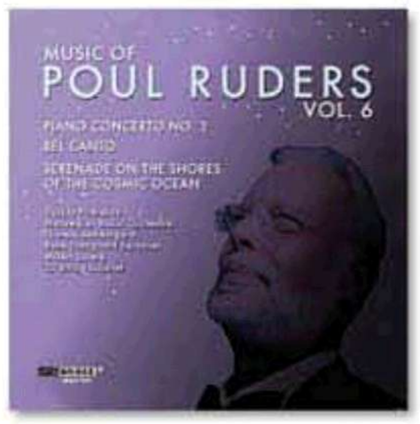
BARTÓK
Violin Concerto No 2. Rhapsodies Nos 1 & 2
Barnabás Kelemen *vn* **Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra / Zoltán Kocsis**
Hungaroton HSACD32509
From the first bars, we're clearly in the hands of a master Bartók interpreter in Zoltán Kocsis. Cunningly, he holds a contrast between the orchestra, who use minimal vibrato, and the ripe sound of Kelemen's violin, for instance – their acerbity balancing his sweetness. It feels lyrical yet idiomatic. A great recording.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**



GRIEG
'Complete Symphonic Works, Vol 1'
WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne / Eivind Aadland
Audite AUDITE92 651
Does there still need to be special pleading for Grieg's orchestral music? He has a clutch of ardent champions on record and, if anyone is still unconverted to the depth and worth of this music, Eivind Aadland and his Cologne forces are set to change their minds. This is a hugely enjoyable first volume in what promises to be an excellent survey.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**



MAHLER
Symphony No 3
Mihoko Fujimura *contr* **Bamberg Symphony Orchestra / Jonathan Nott**
Tudor TUDOR7170
It's taken a while, but in any list of today's leading Mahlerians – Haitink, MTT, Chailly et al – Jonathan Nott would now naturally be included. He doesn't urge big-name orchestras to ever-louder *fortissimos*. Instead, he presents deeply thought-through interpretations. The result? One of the most absorbing recorded Mahler cycles of recent times.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 70**



RUDERS
Piano Concerto No 2. Bel canto. Serenade on the Shores of the Cosmic Ocean
Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen *vn* **Vassily Primakov** *pf* **iO String Quartet, Norwegian Radio Orchestra / Thomas Søndergård**
Bridge BRIDGE9336
Poul Ruders refuses to be pigeonholed even, it seems, within a single piece of music. So here his works change mood and texture on a coin, at once nimble and weighty. A terrific disc, with Vassily Primakov playing the concerto written for him.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 72**

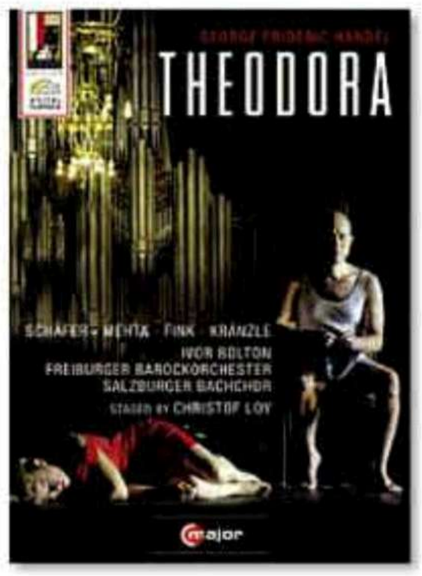
Reissue of the month



PROKOFIEV
Piano Sonatas
Matti Raekallio *pf*
Ondine ODE1103-2Q
As Bryce Morrison points out, there is abundant and big-name competition in these works. But how wonderful to welcome back these fine performances from Helsinki-born pianist Matti Raekallio. He teaches at Juilliard these days, but his students could do worse than avidly study this reissue from Ondine.

It would be wrong to say that he makes light of Prokofiev's technical demands. Rather, he relishes them, finding the poetry through them, attacking them with determination and, when required, a light touch.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**

DVD & Blu-ray of the month



HANDEL
Theodora
Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Ivor Bolton
C Major 705708 / 705804
Peter Sellars's Glyndebourne staging of *Theodora* has long held sway for me, so it's good to welcome a strong newcomer from Salzburg.

Christoph Loy, one of the most interesting directors around at the moment, stages the action in a concert setting. Paradoxical though that may sound, it works brilliantly, throwing the emphasis on to the music as action in itself. Christine Schäfer leads a fine line-up.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 104**

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Jiří Bělohlávek's Martinů: 'Here, finally, is a Martinů symphonies set that is satisfyingly, completely and thrillingly right'



TCHAIKOVSKY
Symphony No 6
MENDELSSOHN
A Midsummer Night's Dream – Overture
Philharmonia Orchestra / Sir Charles Mackerras
Signum SIGCD253
The riches from Sir Charles Mackerras's recorded legacy continue to be uncovered. This latest is a splendid, moving account of the *Pathétique* Symphony. Sentimentality is avoided and yet humanity is everywhere. The Philharmonia are on world-class form and you get the Mendelssohn overture as a nice fill-up.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 73**



ELGAR
Piano Quintet.
String Quartet
Piers Lane *pf*
Goldner Quartet
Hyperion CDA67857
For some composers, I have come to believe that you find the purest manifestation of themselves in their chamber music. As with Vaughan Williams, there's an argument to say that this pertains to Elgar. For here he is, naked genius, without the rich orchestrations, singing straight to the heart. And these performances are quite superb.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



SCHUBERT
Piano Trios
Trio Dali
Fuga Libera FUG584
An eminent Belgian label that sometimes slips under the radar somewhat, Fuga Libera clearly have some canny artist-spotters in their ranks, judging from the quality of musicians they manage to find. The latest discovery is the Dali Trio, a prize-winning young European group who cast a lasting spell on this repertoire. Harriet Smith's review even compares them favourably to the Beaux Arts Trio. More from the Dalis please!
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**



CHOPIN. LISZT. RAVEL
Benjamin Grosvenor *pf*
Decca 478 3206DH
Hype can be a double-edged sword. If people constantly tell you how good you are, you are left with one high bar to clear. It's even more dangerous when you're young, emotionally and artistically fragile. Yet Decca's decision to sign 19-year-old Benjamin Grosvenor seems sound. For he's a player whose interpretative maturity belies his age. These aren't just fine performances for a youngster. They are fine performances, full stop.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 85**



DONIZETTI
Lucia di Lammermoor
Soloists; Orchestra and Chorus of the Mariinsky Theatre / Valery Gergiev
Mariinsky MAR0512
Now here's an intriguing pairing. In the pit, Valery Gergiev, heavyweight conductor with a penchant for the orchestral fist. On the set, Natalie Dessay, light-voiced yet mercurial stage animal. One would think that a Gergiev *Lucia* would need a weightier soprano, a Netrebko perhaps. But Dessay's complete commitment to the role is matched by Gergiev's theatricality.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 98**

Recording of the month



MARTINŮ
Symphonies Nos 1-6
BBC Symphony Orchestra / Jiří Bělohlávek
Onyx ONYX4061
One hesitates to saddle a set with the epithet "important". It threatens to drain any sense of emotional engagement out of the thing, as though it belongs on your shelves as a badge of honour rather than a living experience happily caught on record.

So do this the other way round. Get the set, put it on and I promise you that within moments its importance will become clear. Because finally, here is a Martinů symphonies set in good sound that is satisfyingly, completely and thrillingly right. From first to last, Bělohlávek and the BBC players put scarcely a foot wrong. They play Martinů's complex sonorities for all they're worth and, above all, they find the sense of story in the music.

From the mystery and drama that start the First Symphony to a sense of suspense – never far and sometimes ratcheted to the kind of tension one would expect from a Hitchcock film – that pervades the journey, Martinů is there as narrative as well as pure sound world. It's a riveting approach and the players deliver in spades.

On this form, the BBC Symphony Orchestra (always admired in contemporary music) are the equals of most. In this music, as they've proved before, conductor and orchestra have a very special dynamic. There's no worthier testament to their time together.
▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH STEINWAY & SONS
GRAMOPHONE CLASSICAL MUSIC AWARDS 2011

THE SHORT LIST

The excitement builds. From the thousands of recordings to be issued over the past year – and after an ultra-rigorous voting process – we reveal the three discs in each category to be short-listed for a *Gramophone* Award. As last year, the field is an exceptionally strong one and already there's plenty to put on your shopping list (Perahia, Freire and Osborne in Instrumental, anyone?). Next issue, the results!

BAROQUE INSTRUMENTAL

- **CPE Bach** Harpsichord Concertos, Wq43
  Andreas Staier *hpd* **Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Petra Müllejans**
- **Handel** Concerti grossi, Op 6
  Avison Ensemble / Pavlo Beznosiuk *vn*
- **Telemann** 'Musique de table' – The Complete Tafelmusik **Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Petra Müllejans, Gottfried von der Goltz** *vns*



Harmonia Mundi Ⓜ ② HMC90 2083/4 (6/11)



Linn Ⓑ ③ CKD362 (10/10)



Harmonia Mundi Ⓑ ④ HMC90 2042/5 (1/11)

BAROQUE VOCAL

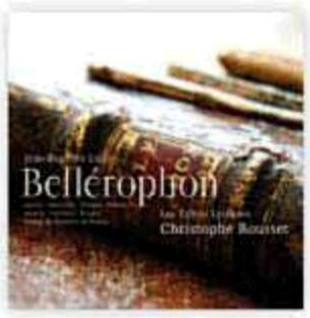
- **Handel** Apollo e Dafne
  Soloists; La Risonanza / Fabio Bonizzoni *hpd*
- **Handel** Flavio, re de' Longobardi
  Soloists; Early Opera Company / Christian Curnyn
- **Lully** Bellérophon
  Soloists; Namur Chamber Choir; Les Talens Lyriques / Christophe Rousset



Glossa Ⓕ GCD921527 (10/10)



Chandos Ⓕ ② CHAN0773 (2/10)



Aparté Ⓕ ② AP015 (7/11)

CHAMBER

- **Bartók. Grieg. R Strauss** Violin Sonatas
  Vilde Frang *vn* **Michail Lifits** *pf*
- **Beethoven** Violin Sonatas, Vol 3
  Alina Ibragimova *vn* **Cédric Tiberghien** *pf*
- **Dvořák** String Quartets – No 12, 'American', Op 96 B179; No 13, Op 106 B192
  Pavel Haas Quartet



EMI Ⓜ 947639-2 (5/11)



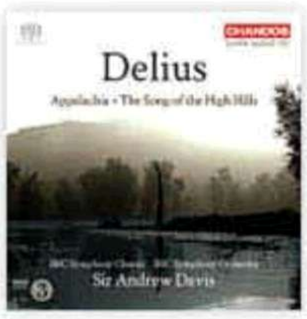
Wigmore Hall Live Ⓜ WHLIVE0045 (7/11)



Supraphon Ⓕ SU4038-2 (12/10)

CHORAL

- **Delius** Appalachia. The Song of the High Hills
  Soloists; BBC Symphony Chorus & Orchestra / Sir Andrew Davis
- **Elgar** The Kingdom
  Soloists; Hallé Choir and Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder
- **MacMillan** Visitatio sepulchri. Sun-Dogs
  Netherlands Radio Choir & Chamber Philharmonic / Celso Antunes, James MacMillan



Chandos Ⓕ CHSA5088 (6/11)



Hallé Ⓑ ② CDHLD7526 (12/10)


BIS Ⓕ BIS-SACD1719 (8/10)

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CONCERTO

- **Bartók** Piano Concertos
  Bavouzet *pf* **BBC Philharmonic / Gianandrea Noseda**
- **Debussy** Fantaisie **Ravel** Piano Concertos
  Jean-Efflam Bavouzet *pf*
  BBC Symphony Orchestra / Yan Pascal Tortelier
- **Reger** Piano Concerto **R Strauss** Burleske
  Marc-André Hamelin *pf* **Berlin RSO / Ilan Volkov**



Chandos Ⓕ
CHAN10610 (A/10)



Chandos Ⓕ SACD
CHSA5084 (12/10)



Hyperion Ⓕ
CDA67635 (5/11)

CONTEMPORARY

- **Birtwistle** Night's Black Bird
  Hallé Orchestra / Ryan Wigglesworth
- **D Matthews** Winter Passions
  Nash Ensemble / Lionel Friend
- **Ruders** 'Music of Poul Ruders, Vol 6'
  Norwegian Radio Orchestra / Thomas Søndergård



NMC Ⓕ NMCD156
(10/11)



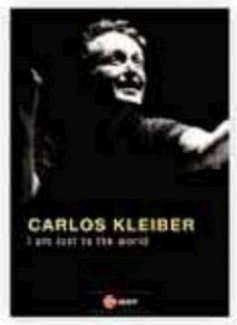
NMC Ⓕ NMCD152
(10/10)



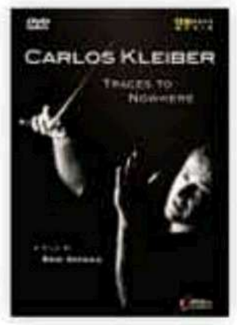
Bridge Ⓕ BRIDGE9336
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DVD DOCUMENTARY

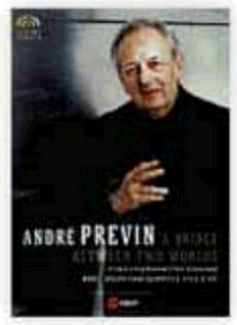
- **Carlos Kleiber** 'I am lost to the world'
  A film by **Georg Wübbolt**
- **Carlos Kleiber** 'Traces to Nowhere'
  A film by **Eric Schultz**
- **André Previn** 'A Bridge Between Two Worlds'
  A film by **Lillian Birnbaum and Peter Stepan Jungk**



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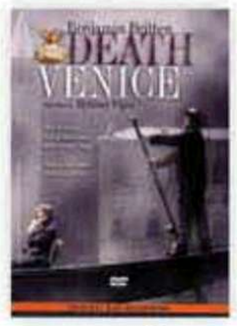
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Ⓕ DVD 101 553 (8/11)



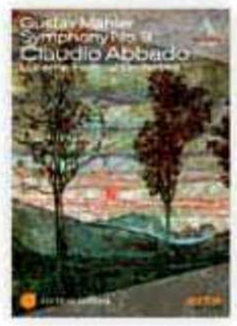
C Major Ⓕ DVD
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DVD PERFORMANCE

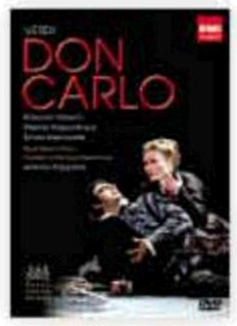
- **Britten** Death in Venice
  La Fenice, Venice / Bruno Bartoletti (*dir* Pier Luigi Pizzi)
- **Mahler** Symphony No 9
  Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Claudio Abbado
  (*dir* Michael Beyer)
- **Verdi** Don Carlo
  Royal Opera / Antonio Pappano (*dir* Nicholas Hytner)



Dynamic Ⓕ DVD
33608 (2/11)



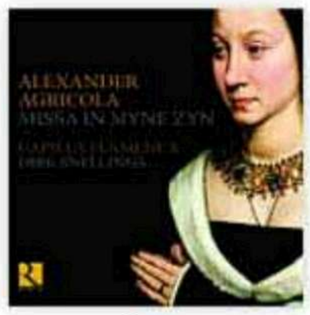
Accentus Ⓕ DVD
ACC20214 (6/11)



EMI Ⓕ ② DVD
631609-9 (12/10)

EARLY MUSIC

- **Agricola** Missa In myne zyn
  Capilla Flamenca / Dirk Snellings
- **Byrd** Complete Consort Music
  Phantasm
- **Striggio** Mass in 40 Parts
  I Fagiolini / Robert Hollingworth



Ricercar Ⓕ RIC306 (5/11)



Linn Ⓕ SACD CKD372
(9/11)



Decca Ⓕ ② (CD + DVD)
478 2734DH2 (5/11)

HISTORIC ARCHIVE

- **Beethoven** String Trios (r1960)
  Leonid Kogan *vn* **Rudolf Barshai** *va*
  Mstislav Rostropovich *vc*
- **Mahler** Symphony No 10 (Deryck Cooke performing version, r1960/64)
  LSO / Berthold Goldschmidt
- **Monteverdi** The Coronation of Poppea (r1971)
  Sadler's Wells Opera / Raymond Leppard



Supraphon Ⓕ
SU4052-2 (8/11)



Testament Ⓜ ③
SBT3 1457 (5/11)



Chandos Ⓜ ②
CHAN3172 (9/10)

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Mahler Symphony No 9
Valery Gergiev
London Symphony Orchestra

The final release in Valery Gergiev's acclaimed Mahler cycle. Available 5 September

SACD LSO0668

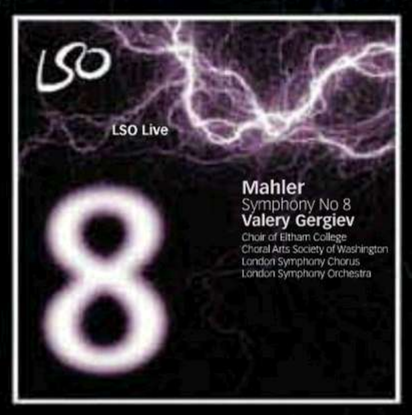


Mahler Symphony No 9
Valery Gergiev, LSO

New release

'from the rosy vein struck by the strings to the honed gestures of the woodwind, here was an orchestra at one with itself and its director'
The Guardian (UK) concert review

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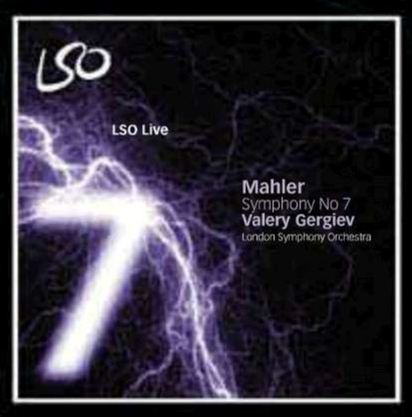


Mahler Symphony No 8
Valery Gergiev, LSO

IRR Outstanding
'This is a great disc'
International Record Review (UK)

Gramophone Recommended
Gramophone (UK)

SACD LSO0665



Mahler Symphony No 7
Valery Gergiev, LSO

Critics' Disc of the Year
BBC Radio 3 CD Review (UK)

Disc of the Month
BBC Music Magazine (UK)

SACD LSO0661



Mahler Symphony No 6
Valery Gergiev, LSO

Discs of the Year
Classica (France)

Disc of the Month
Fono Forum (Germany)

Editor's Choice
Gramophone (UK)

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  Soloists; RIAS Chamber Choir; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin / René Jacobs
- **Rossini** Ermione
  Soloists; London Philharmonic Orchestra / David Parry
- **Verdi** Otello
  Soloists; London Symphony Chorus & Orchestra / Sir Colin Davis

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- **Shostakovich** Symphony No 10
  Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko
- **Suk** Asrael
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  Bax Spring Fire **Bridge** Enter Spring
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  Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder

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- **'Diva Divo'**
  Joyce DiDonato *mez* **Chorus and Orchestra of the Opéra National de Lyon / Kazushi Ono**
- **'Ne me refuse pas'**
  Marie-Nicole Lemieux *contr*
  French National Orchestra / Fabien Gabel
- **'Verismo Arias'**
  Jonas Kaufmann *ten* **Chorus and Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Antonio Pappano**

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  Gerald Finley *bar* **Julius Drake** *pf*
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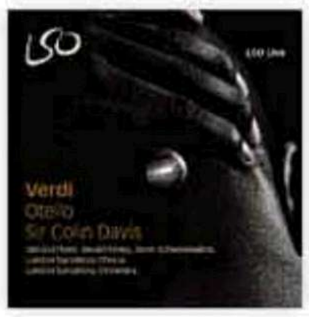
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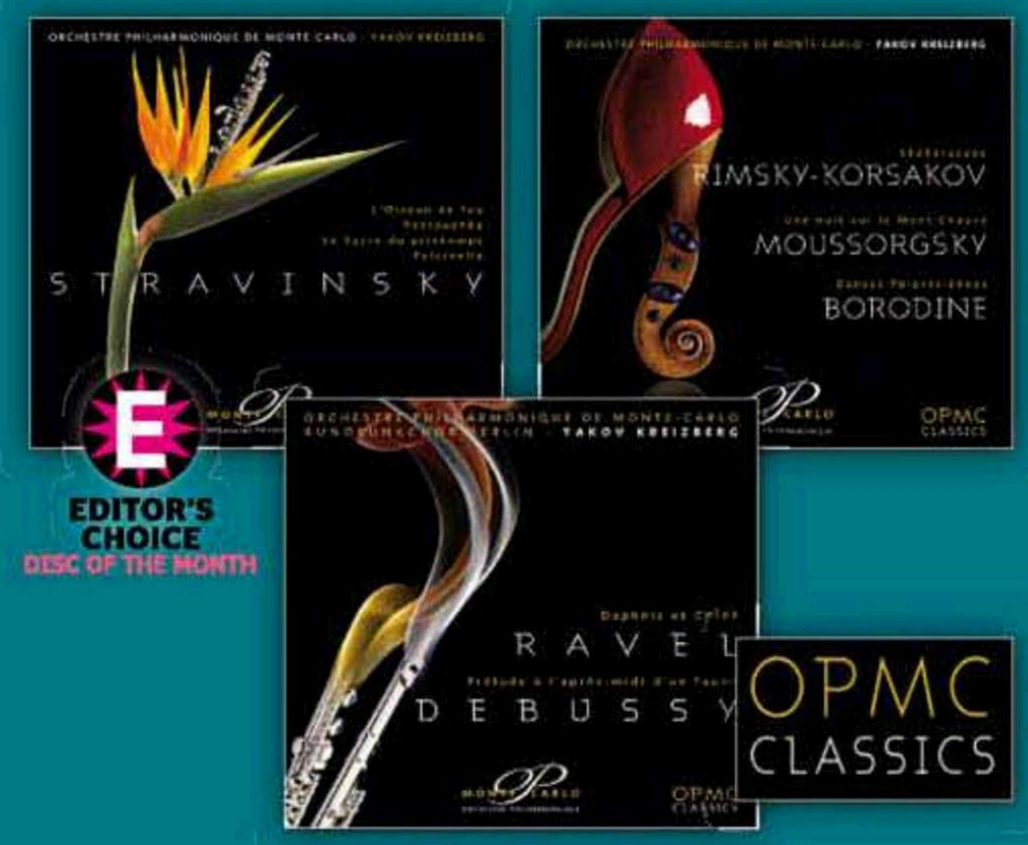
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The Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo, under the late great maestro Yakov Kreizberg, continues their Gramophone Disc of the Month series with Russian and French programmes



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DISC OF THE MONTH

NEW RELEASE AUSTRALIAN ELOQUENCE



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Josef Krips



MUSICKE OF SUNDRIE KINDES
The Consort of Musicke
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SOUNDBITES

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Philip Kennicott p28 » The Trial p30 » Biography of an Instrument p32 » Quiz p33

Søndergård to head BBC NOW

Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård has been named as the new principal conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He takes up the role in September next year, succeeding Thierry Fischer, and in the meantime will hold the title of principal conductor designate.

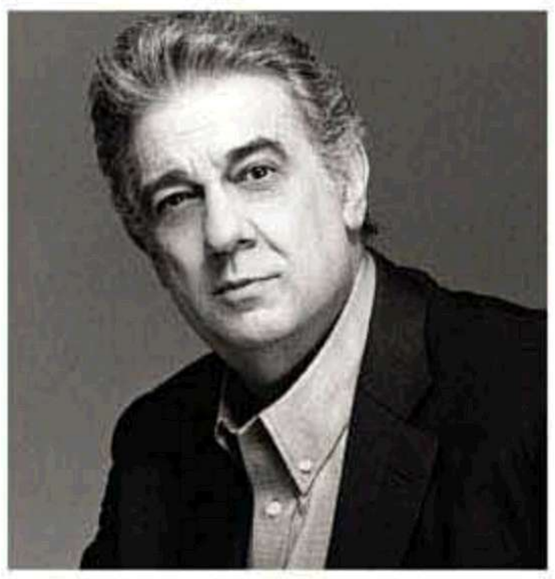
Søndergård is currently principal conductor and musical adviser of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra. Recent recordings include Poul Ruders's opera *Kafka's Trial* on Dacapo, as well violinist Vilde Frang's recent EMI release of Prokofiev and Sibelius concertos.

Søndergård made his BBC NOW debut in December 2009, which he recalls as "an amazing moment for me…I retain a vivid memory of the players' involvement and sheer enthusiasm from the very first note. It is encounters with such musicians, eager to join me in finding a common path to the heart of the music, that remind me why I love to make music."

"As a Dane, music from the Nordic countries has a special significance for Thomas," said BBC NOW director David Murray, "but his repertoire is very wide and this will translate into an enticing musical diet for our audiences."



Thomas Søndergård: BBC NOW's principal from September 2012



Plácido Domingo fights music piracy

Plácido Domingo has been appointed chairman of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry. The IFPI represents record label interests worldwide and has been active in campaigning against illegal music sharing. It is hoped that Domingo will be a powerful advocate for intellectual property rights.

IFPI chief executive Frances Moore praised Domingo as an artist who "speaks from the heart about the issues that matter to him". Domingo's arrival is particularly timely "as governments in many countries consider new legislation to curb piracy and help develop the legitimate digital music business," Moore explained.

The 70-year-old tenor's role will focus on lobbying governments to toughen up legislation on illegal downloading. "I have always passionately believed in the importance of respecting talent and in the rights of all those who perform, create, produce and invest in music," he said.



Alexander Schimpf has been named the winner of the Cleveland International Piano Competition. The 29-year-old receives a cash prize of $50,000 and over 50 engagements, including a Carnegie Hall recital debut. Now in its 36th year, the competition's list of alumni includes Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Angela Hewitt.



The Royal Opera House will premiere *Yes*, with music by **Errollyn Wallen** and a libretto by playwright Bonnie Greer, in November. The work is inspired by events leading up to the controversial appearance of British National Party leader Nick Griffin on the BBC's *Question Time* in 2009, but does not feature Griffin himself.

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Seiji Ozawa wins 2011 Praemium Imperiale



Ozawa: honoured by the Japan Art Association

Seiji Ozawa has won this year's Praemium Imperiale award for music. Bestowed by the Japan Art Association, the prize comes at a time when that country is fighting to reassure artists that it is a safe destination for travellers, and a continuing beacon of culture in the East.

The choice of Ozawa, Japan's best-known classical musician and founder of the Saito Kinen Festival, for the music prize will further reinforce that message. Other Praemium Imperiale prizes went to Dame Judi Dench (film/theatre), Anish Kapoor (sculpture), Ricardo Legorreta (architecture) and Bill Viola (painting).

Regarded as the Japanese equivalent of a Nobel prize, the Praemium Imperiale is one of the most lucrative awards in the arts world. Each winner receives 15 million yen (£115,000) and a gold medal. After a celebratory London reception in July, the recipients were invited to visit the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

GRAMOPHONE TALKS TO...

Nicola Benedetti

The violinist on her first foray into the Baroque



Why wait until now to record a Baroque disc?
I had always wanted to record one but I'd been putting it off for years because I didn't feel ready. But finally I felt I had undertaken enough Baroque study to prepare for it.

Why focus on Vivaldi, Tartini and Veracini?
I spent three or four months listening to music and I didn't rush that process at all. I tried to focus on composers from the same area who were composing at the same time – they all heard each other play and were influenced by each other. So that's one connection; but even more important for me was a characteristic similarity between the pieces. I wanted to demonstrate, for the most part, the extrovert side of Italian Baroque.

How did you need to adapt your playing?
Over the past few years I've had a few weeks here and there with Baroque specialists and before the album I played to Rachel Podger. At the time, I was in a panic because I had yet to find a bow that I really matched with. Rachel said she had the bow that could solve all my problems. It's much lighter than the heavy Romantic French bow I normally play with. It's also shorter, wider, curves outwards instead of inwards and has a longer tip. The differences were huge but it felt so right and after that everything gelled.

You are very sparing with your vibrato.
Even Brahms said how disgraceful it was to play all the time with vibrato, yet it sounds strange to us now to hear playing without it. I have always tried to have the basis of expression in the right hand with the vibrato as a conscious addition rather than a default, so it's not too difficult for me. At the same time, it's definitely challenging. You have to trust that the colours with the right hand are enough. There's a purity and cleanness about the sound that's very nice though; it feels great!

Benedetti's 'Italia' is reviewed on page 75

TAKING NOTE

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY...

The Guardian

Is the music industry's digital focus justified? Given the media's devotion to downloads, the physical format often seems to be "on its last legs". Yet actual sales figures tell a different story. In 2010, 82.2 per cent of album sales were CDs, according to the BPI. While digital sales have grown to 25 per cent this year, much of this is due to the industry's "obsession with converting consumers to digital". Furthermore, a boom in vinyl sales seriously questions the unerring digital outlook taken by record labels.
www.guardian.co.uk

BBC News

The Israeli Chamber Orchestra challenged taboos by performing Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* at this year's Bayreuth Festival. The decision amounted to a "break with tradition", as Wagner's work was "appropriated by the Nazis". While performances of the composer by Israeli musicians are rare, conductor Roberto Paternostro argued for the importance of confronting his legacy. Daniel Barenboim courted similar controversy in 2001 by conducting Wagner at the Israel Festival.
www.bbc.co.uk/news



The 2011 ECHO Klassik prize-winners were announced in July. Soprano Simone Kermes was awarded Female Singer of the Year. Instrumentalists of the Year included violinist **Lisa Batiashvili**, while Newcomer prizes went to nine artists, including violinist Vilde Frang. The ECHO Klassik awards are granted annually by the German Phono Akademie.



Mark David Boden, **Laura Jayne Bowler**, David Curington and Hollie Harding have been selected for the 2011-12 Leverhulme Young Composers Scheme. The composers will work with the London Philharmonic Orchestra to create a work for the Debut Sounds concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 2012.



PHOTOGRAPHY: BETINA SKOVBRO PHOTOGRAPHY, GETTY , ROGER MASTROIANNI, SHEILA ROCK, AZZURRA PRIMAVERA, ROGER MASTROIANNI, LISA BATIASHVILI, DECCA

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GALLERY VIEW



Beethoven on the beach

Is East Neuk Festival's 20-tonne sand sculpture a garish shrine or an eye-catching statement? Nestled within the quiet Scottish village of Crail, Jamie Wardley's creation is hard to avoid. One thing's for sure: the festival has gained as much of a reputation for its cheeky sand-based stunts as for its world-class chamber music.

Last year, Wardley crafted a steam train entirely from sand for the festival. The sculptor returned to the forecourt of the Honeypot Tearoom this July with his Sand In Your Eye team, constructing this monumental Beethoven bust. Dominating the picturesque village, the musical titan certainly strikes a surreal note as it scowls down a relatively subdued high street.



Gold medals, each worth €20,000, were awarded at the 14th International Tchaikovsky Competition to cellist **Narek Hakhnazaryan**, vocalists Sun Young Seo and Jong Min Park, and pianist Daniil Trifonov – who also won the Grand Prix. The violin gold medal was not awarded. Held every four years, the competition has launched such names as Gidon Kremer.



Wilton's Music Hall has been saved. Following its rejection by the Heritage Lottery Fund earlier this year, the East London venue faced closure. But a significant public response has allowed Wilton's to raise the necessary funds for urgent structural repairs. Wilton's is the oldest surviving Grand Music Hall in the world.

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The Specialist Classical Chart

The UK's best-selling pure classical releases

OFFICIAL charts company *Compiled in association with the BPI by The Official Charts Company*

1 *(2)* **'Miloš – The Guitar'**
Miloš Karadaglić *DG*

2 *(1)* **'The Maltese Tenor'**
Joseph Calleja *Decca*

3 *(3)* **Chopin. Liszt. Ravel**
Benjamin Grosvenor *Decca*

4 *(New)* **Chopin – Complete Waltzes**
Stephen Hough *Hyperion*

5 *(New)* **Alwyn – Concerti grossi**
RLPO / David Lloyd-Jones *Naxos*

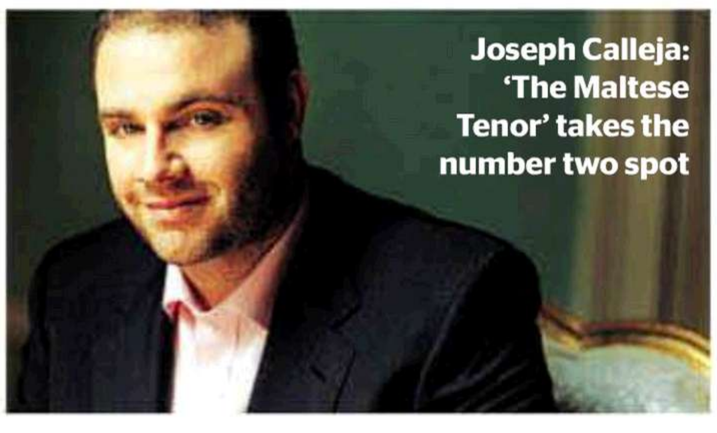
6 *(10)* **Beethoven – Fidelio**
Stemme; Lucerne FO / Abbado *Decca*

7 *(4)* **Liszt – 'My Piano Hero'**
Lang Lang *Sony*

8 *(6)* **Mahler – Symphony No 2**
LPO Choir and Orch / Jurowski *LPO*

9 *(9)* **Berlioz – Les nuits d'été**
Lorraine Hunt Lieberson / McGegan *PB*

10 *(12)* **Elgar – Piano Quintet**
Goldner Quartet; Lane *Hyperion*



Joseph Calleja: 'The Maltese Tenor' takes the number two spot

Chart for week ending August 6, 2011 (previous week's position in brackets).

Log on to www.gramophone.co.uk for weekly updates of the chart, along with reviews of many of the featured recordings.

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GRAMOPHONE TALKS TO...

Patrick Davin

The conductor talks about his fascinating set of Vieuxtemps violin concertos



Why revive these works?
Most of them are well known, but not every one, and now we know why – it's not a matter of quality but a matter of difficulty! The Fifth Concerto was well known, the Fourth also – they were recorded by Itzhak Perlman for example – but when you arrive at the Sixth and Seventh, it's more unusual to hear them.

Seven concertos, seven soloists...a big task.
I spent three months with Vieuxtemps! But it was a big pleasure, and also very interesting because of the quality of the music.

Has your view of Vieuxtemps changed?
When you are a soloist (as he was, and very famous too) you feel music so intensely that it's normal to want to let the music come out in ways other than in performance. In the case of Vieuxtemps, it was through composing. You could say the same of Leonard Bernstein.

How did you choose the soloists?
Augustin Dumay, master-in-residence of the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel where the soloists come from, decided who was to play what, and it was very, very clever of him. The First needed someone with a huge technique both to overcome the incredible difficulties on the violin and also to hold our attention for over 50 minutes; the Second required fantastic temperament; the Third needed precision, because the relationship between the right hand and left hand is so important...

The orchestral writing is quite epic.
It reminded me of the way Donizetti writes accompaniment. When you compare him to two other giants of that moment, Rossini and Bellini, his orchestration is quite ambitious; he uses many trombones, lots of percussion. It's the same problem with Vieuxtemps's concertos – you have to make it lighter or it could be too heavy and loud for the soloists.

Davin's Vieuxtemps is reviewed on page 77

NY City Opera drops music director role

New York City Opera is set to cut the position of music director, held by conductor George Manahan. In an interview with the *New York Times*, the opera company's general manager and artistic director George Steel stated that "it doesn't make sense for us to have a music director". Manahan has acted as music director for NYCO since 1996 and was last year also appointed music director of the American Composers Orchestra.

"The New York City Opera has been an important part of my life for the past 40 years," Manahan said, "so naturally I am saddened that the new vision for the Company's future does not include a role for a music director."

Conductor **Lionel Bringuier** will continue his close relationship with the Los Angeles Philharmonic until the end of the 2012-13 season. His two-year resident conductor appointment follows roles as assistant conductor and associate conductor with the orchestra. Bringuier is also music director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León in Spain.



The **Emerson String Quartet** will make their debut on the Sony label with their first Mozart recording in 20 years. The October release will feature the last three quartets and will coincide with a series of international concerts in venues including London's Wigmore Hall and New York's Alice Tully Hall.



PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRISTIAN STEINER, JONATHAN GRIMBERT-BARRE, J HENRY FAIR, JAMES PERRY, DECCA/MITCH JENKINS

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Balé da Cidade de São Paulo – London Symphony Orchestra – Valery Gergiev – Zaz – Maria Schneider – «Le jardin des délices» / Bianca Li – The Cleveland Orchestra – Franz Welser-Möst – «Der Turm» / Claude Lenners – Souad Massi & Band – «Deca Dance» / Batsheva Ensemble – Christian Gerhaher – Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg – Emmanuel Krivine – Joshua Redman / Brad Mehldau Duo – «Elektro Kif» / Bianca Li – Magdalena Kožená – Anoushka Shankar – Les Arts Florissants – William Christie – Daniel Hope – «Tue-Tête» / Judith Chemla – Cristina Branco – Emmanuel Pahud – «Gina» / Eugénie Rebetez – Anne Sofie von Otter – Truls Mørk

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A CONVERSATION WITH...



Alice Sara Ott

On her latest disc, this half-Japanese, half-German pianist explores lightness in darker Beethoven and fearlessly scales the peaks, says **Amanda Holloway**

Size isn't important, Alice Sara Ott believes. We're sitting in a London coffee bar comparing hands, and I have to admit she's right. Her hands aren't freakishly large, as critics have assumed after hearing her astonishing performances of Liszt, Rachmaninov or Tchaikovsky.

Half-Japanese, half-German, Alice Sara is willowy but undoubtedly strong, and, at 23, has the physical and mental powers of a musician twice her size and age. "If you can stretch one octave that's enough," she says firmly. "I can stretch 10 notes – that's nothing special – but you don't need to be able to do that." Even for Liszt? "For me it's very important not to separate the technique from the music. Of course you need to master the difficulties, but Liszt's music is also sensitive and deep, so you must express that."

Ott's new Beethoven disc is her fourth for Deutsche Grammophon in just two years. It follows Chopin waltzes, Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1 with Thomas Hengelbrock and the Munich Philharmonic, and Liszt's Études. Her choice of Beethoven works came after much soul-searching: "At first I thought of doing the well-known sonatas, the *Moonlight*, the *Pathétique* and the *Waldstein*. But I thought, 'There's already such a big choice – Brendel, Gilels, and so on – people don't need to buy my recording.' So I combined both his C major sonatas and it turned out to be a really interesting concept."

The Sonata No 3, Op 2, was written when Beethoven was in his twenties. By the time he wrote the *Waldstein* (Op 53, No 21), his life had taken on a much darker cast, and Ott says it's evident in the music. "Normally the key of C major is very light, it has a happy character; but if you listen to the *Waldstein*, it's so dark." Her performance of the piece on the recording, however, seems to have picked up some of the lightness of the earlier work. "That's Beethoven's character. His music can be very dark, but at the same time he never really loses his hope, and you can always feel it."

Her next recording for DG is a live recital including Mozart, a Schubert sonata and Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. After that she plans to record one of the peaks of the solo piano repertoire, Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. She isn't daunted by the number of great pianists who have gone before her: "If all young artists worried about popular pieces having been recorded so many times, we wouldn't record anything. If one understands the piece I don't think age matters." And that's the key to Alice Sara Ott's appeal. She has the confidence and technique to deliver her own interpretation, so that even the most-played concertos sound fresh-minted and revelatory, as in her performance of the Grieg Concerto at the BBC Proms on August 8.

> 'If one understands the piece I don't think age matters'

I leave with Ott's failsafe remedy for a hangover – miso soup and rice – and enormous admiration for her intelligence, modesty and sheer normality. "I thank my parents for that," she says. "They were never 'stage parents', they were more concerned that we had a good social life than that we practised 10 hours a day." Yes, there's more than one prodigious pianist in the family. "My younger sister, Mona Asuka Ott, is also a very good concert pianist." She admits that they do have sisterly disagreements about little things like fingerings. "But we really love each other; and living together has a practical advantage, too – when one of us is learning a new concerto, the other can play the orchestra!" ●

Alice Sara Ott's Beethoven disc for Deutsche Grammophon, which was released on August 5, will be reviewed in Gramophone next month

PHOTOGRAPHY: FELIX BROEDE

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“Andrew Litton has transformed the Bergen Philharmonic into a world class orchestra.

INFORMATION, COPENHAGEN



BERGEN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA ANDREW LITTON MUSIC DIRECTOR



FELIX MENDELSSOHN
Symphonies Nos. 3 & 5

BIS 2009

ANDREW LITTON

Recording of the Month
MUSIC WEB INTERNATIONAL



SERGEI PROKOFIEV
Piano Concertos Nos. 2 & 3
Piano Sonata No. 2

ANDREW LITTON
FREDDY KEMPF piano

BIS 2009

Editor's Choice
GRAMOPHONE

Nominated for the 2010
GRAMOPHONE AWARDS

Disc of the Month
CLASSICS TODAY

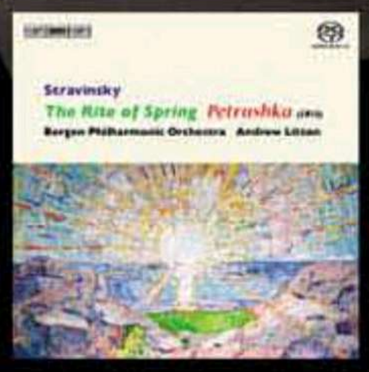


MIKLÓS RÓZSA
Viola Concerto
BÉLA BARTÓK
Viola Concerto
TIBOR SERLY Rhapsody for Viola and Orchestra

ANDREW LITTON
LAWRENCE POWER viola

HYPERION 2010

CD of the Month
THE ARTS DESK



IGOR STRAVINSKY
Rite of Spring
Petrouchka (1911)

ANDREW LITTON

BIS 2010

Disc of the Month
CLASSICS TODAY



JOHAN HALVORSEN
Orchestral Works III

NEEME JÄRVI
RAGNHILD HEMSING
Hardanger fiddle
MARIANNE THORSEN violin

CHANDOS 2011

Recording of the Month
MUSICWEB INTERNATIONAL



MAX BRUCH
Violin Concerto
Romance
String Quintet in A Minor

ANDREW LITTON
VADIM GLUZMAN violin

BIS 2011

Disc of the Month
CLASSICS TODAY

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DIARY

Sarah Connolly

The mezzo-soprano reflects on the song-cycle – its fusion of music and poetry and why, as an art form, it can be a joy to perform in recital

Of the many singing competitions I endured as a student, it was the English Song Prize that won me a commended, possibly because I remembered all the verses to Stanford's "La belle dame sans merci" and probably because I forgot my feelings of inadequacy and actually told the story. So simple a formula, you might think, just to tell a story; but for a self-critical young singer, assailed by the complexities of acquiring a technique on which to hang a wealth of expression, presenting a *fait accompli* was almost an impossibility. The hook, for me, was good poetry, allied to the most seductive music. As a joint first-study pianist/singer, I spent hundreds of hours in the RCM's practice rooms and library, exploring volumes of Lieder, *mélodies* and English songs.



'For me, song-cycles are islands of refuge; I can be somebody else'

Devising a Lieder recital programme is a bit like creating a menu. What's the occasion? Where? Will I give them indigestion with Wagner, Schumann *and* Mahler? The inclusion of a song-cycle or two in a recital is, for most singers, a given. For me, they are islands of refuge, lily pads; the chance to tell a story, to live a person's life, to experience that joy and pain. I can disappear into my imagination, and be somebody else. For an introspective person, the recital platform is a daunting place, and yet I crave the purity, the silence and concentration this environment allows.

I'm not about to tackle the immense history of the song-cycle, but the name itself suggests a mirroring of the cycles of life, in art form. The Romantic aesthetic jostled with neoclassicism in England and Germany in the latter half of the 18th century. Poets and composers were irresistibly drawn to medieval, mystical and supernatural subjects inherent in German folklore. Crucially for the art song, at the beginning of the 19th century music began to compete with poetry for precedence. Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* (1816) forged the path of the song-cycle with a set of six songs that had organic harmonic unity but poor poetry. Schubert brought new sounds, modern harmonies and profound personal and political drama, all of this culminating in the glorious *Winterreise*.

Beethoven's influence on Schumann is apparent, particularly in Schumann's orchestral works and in his late song-cycle *Gedichte der Königin Maria Stuart* (Op 135). Written in the final year of his life, he created, in my opinion, the perfect mini-drama. Throughout the bleak landscape of these songs, Schumann's own depression mirrored the dark paranoia of Mary Stuart (the poems are attributed to her).

The other type of song-cycle is a setting of a collection of poems on a theme, for example Elgar's *Sea Pictures* written in 1899: the churning seascape is an allegory for mercurial human passion. I was given three hours to record these songs for Naxos, and somewhere in my mind I had written them off. It was a complete shock, therefore, to learn of my Grammy nomination.

Recording an English Song disc is almost a rite of passage for a British singer, and no less so for me. The lives of 20th-century British composers and poets are fascinating; their friendships with each other and their connections to the great European poets. Arthur Symons championed Verlaine and Baudelaire, and in John Ireland's "Tryst", a setting of Symons's "In Fountain Court", Ireland revels in the Gallic sensuality of the poem. John Drinkwater, one of the Dymock poets, befriended Rupert Brooke. I came across Michael Head's setting of Drinkwater's "Cotswold Love" in a search for songs associated with the Cotswolds for my Cheltenham Festival recital and because I live there. What a find.

There are some marvellous summer festivals in the Cotswolds: Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Tetbury and The Three Choirs. The most touching moment in my career concerned a performance of *Dido and Aeneas* in Tetbury Parish church with the OAE. A man and woman approached me after a performance of *Giulio Cesare* at Glyndebourne and told me that their mother, who had attended the Tetbury *Dido*, had died recently after a long illness. In her handbag was a list of things to remember on her deathbed. One of them was my performance of Dido. G

Connolly's CD of English songs, "My true love hath my heart", is out on Chandos (CHAN10691) in October

PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER WARREN

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ONE TO WATCH

Valeriy Sokolov

With his debut concerto album for Virgin Classics, the young Ukrainian violinist is really going places

Ukrainian violinist Valeriy Sokolov has already performed with the world's major orchestras – the Cleveland, the Hallé and the Concertgebouw, to name just a few – and his performance of the Sibelius Concerto with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe under Vladimir Ashkenazy has been released on DVD. Not bad for someone still in their twenties. But despite being lauded as a "powerhouse" in *The Guardian*, he has yet to break through to superstardom (partly his own doing – he has held back on other major recordings until he felt ready).

The release of Sokolov's debut concerto recording on October 3 for Virgin Classics may be about to change all that. If his first foray for the label is any indication, this new disc of the Tchaikovsky and Bartók Concertos with the Zürich Tonhalle Orchestra under David Zinman is likely to attract eager critical attention. His 2009 recording of Enescu's Sonata No 3 was praised by *The Strad* for being "technically immaculate…[his playing] has passion and is as earthy as that of any folk fiddler".

A graduate of the Menuhin School, Sokolov studied with Natasha Boyarskaya, whose former students have included Nicola Benedetti and Alina Ibragimova. In 2005, he won the Grand Prix at the George Enescu International Competition.

To coincide with the album launch, Sokolov will tour the Bartók and Tchaikovsky this autumn. Try and catch him if you can – you might just be witnessing a star in the making. G



Name Valeriy Sokolov
Age 24
Plans From September, he performs the Tchaikovsky and Bartók across France and the UK, also taking in Stockholm, Hannover and areas of Russia and the Ukraine. His UK dates are December 7, 8 and 9 and February 22 and 23, 2012.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ERIC RICHMOND

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Philip Kennicott

On the differences between professionals and amateurs in the music world

Could the Van Cliburn International Amateur Competition overshadow the professional competition of which it is an offshoot? The competition, founded in 1999, is held every four years, alternating with the professional event – like the Winter and Summer Olympics – so that the host city, Fort Worth, never goes more than two years without a major gathering of keyboard talent. Van Cliburn, still tall, gangly and genial, presides, at least ceremonially, making an appearance at the end of the amateur competition in May to award the prizes and give an inspirational speech about the importance of music.

But the professional competition hasn't had a flawless track record for identifying lasting talent. Radu Lupu won the second competition, in 1966, and no one could doubt the judge's perspicacity in awarding him the Gold. But often the most interesting names to emerge from the proceedings, pianists such as Cecile Ousset (fourth place in 1962), Rudolph Buchbinder (fifth place in 1966) and Jeffrey Kahane (third place in 1981), are not the top medallists.

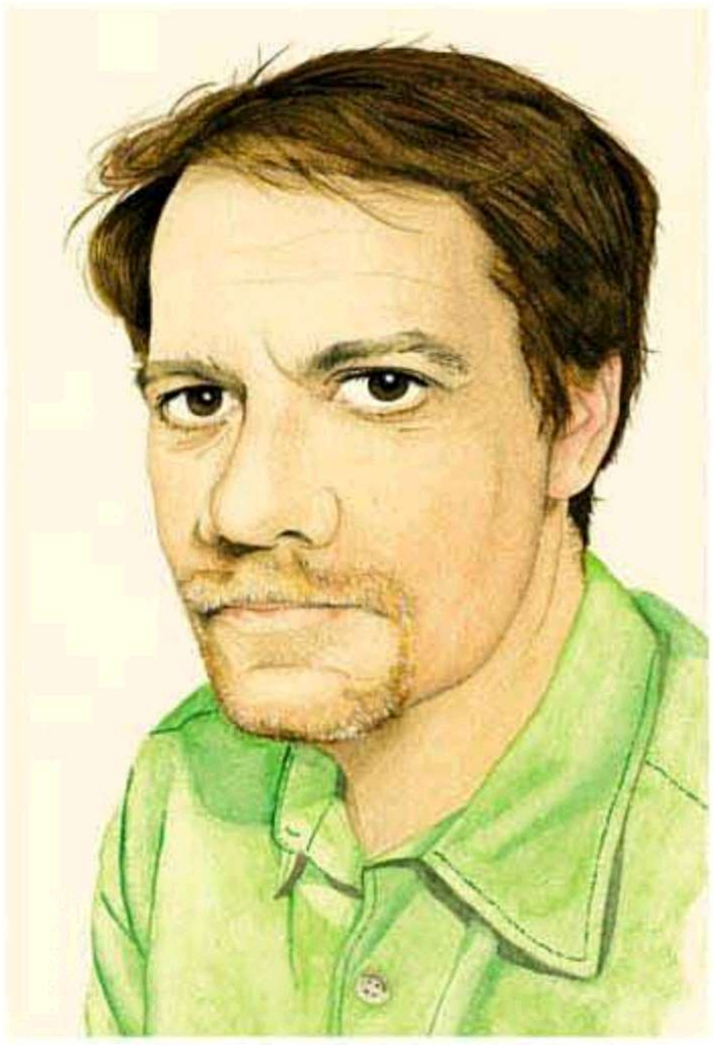
The amateur contest, meanwhile, operates without anyone worrying about whether the winner is not just worthy of recognition but capable of making a lasting impact on the international stage. And there is a built-in human drama to the event, with characters who look a lot more like ordinary people than conservatory-trained keyboard athletes. The narrative possibilities are endless, as local newspapers trace the ups and downs of doctors, engineers and housewives in the pressure-cooker environment of a competition that may be for amateurs, but is nonetheless rigorous, demanding and sometimes even brutal.

I participated in this year's amateur event as a member of the press jury, which awards a prize separate from the main award. It was a fascinating opportunity to examine the elusive, perhaps nonexistent boundaries between amateur and professional definitions of music making.

Everyone knows the dictionary definition of amateur, and its etymological roots in "love". But this doesn't really help much, if you think about it. Doubtless there are professional pianists who hate their job, or forgot the love they once had for music, performance and audiences. But I think the best of them still love music, and that love is the essential foundation of their ability to move people.

The competition's definition of "amateur" is this: "The competition is open to pianists age 35 and older who do not derive their principal source of income through piano performance or instruction." It's a serviceable, and obviously necessary, definition. But it opens up the competition to a wide range of skill levels and talent. The age limit helps to weed out students and aspiring professionals, but the income clause obviously leaves a big loophole: people who don't need to work, or who enjoy such leisure that they can practise as long and hard as a professional.

The idea that "professional" somehow means "better", so deeply embedded in the way we think about the world, also doesn't make much sense when one thinks about art and music. There are plenty of people who make their living from music – teaching, playing the organ on Sundays, accompanying – who don't play nearly as well as the top amateurs I heard in Fort Worth. And there are professionals who can hammer their way through the great piano concertos, night after night, without leaving so much as a scintilla of genuine art in the memory of those who hear them.

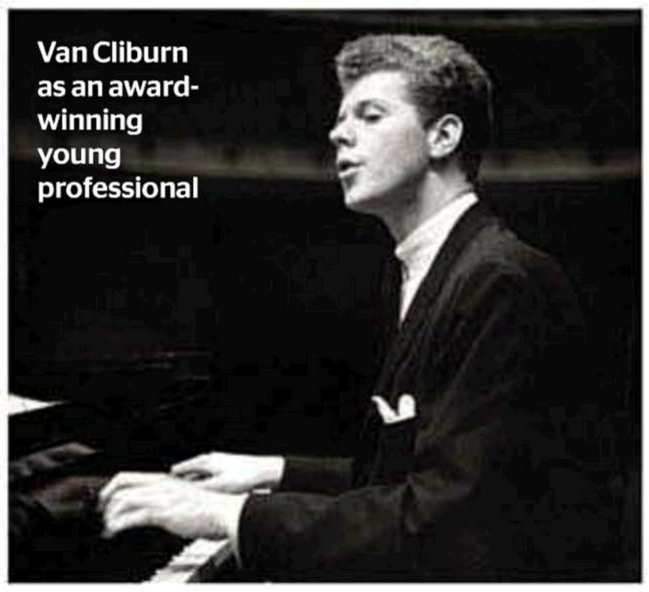


'The idea that professional means better doesn't make much sense in art'

The man who won the competition is a prestigious doctor, who played a brilliant and technically polished performance of the Brahms Handel Variations. The press jury awarded its prize to a mother of four, who put her piano dreams on hold to devote attention to her autistic son. Jane Gibson King took up the piano again in earnest only in 2010. And yet, here and there, for a phrase or a page, or sometimes an entire movement, she played as beautifully as any pianist I've ever heard.

Given the range of performances, from essentially flawless technical displays to players with spotty technique but occasionally heartbreaking expressive power, you end up grasping for some meaningful way of defining what's important about music. "Who do I want to hear again?" became one way we thought about who should win.

In retrospect, it's a very different question from the one that defines greatness among professionals, and especially those we listen to on recordings. That question is essentially this: who do I always want to listen to? There are amateurs players I would be happy to listen to, live, at almost any time. But the indefinable thing that makes a pianist not just a professional, but a great artist, has much to do with being always interesting, always on top of the technical challenge, always unflappable, always generous.



Van Cliburn as an award-winning young professional

Recording can clarify this. It fixes for all time a particular performance, an interpretation in which there is nothing egregiously missing or wrong or inadequate, and in which there is a wealth of interest, ideas and inspiration. Amateurs can move and entertain and enlighten. But one definition of professional might simply be: a pianist who can make a good recording.

ILLUSTRATION: KEVIN SPENCER PHOTOGRAPHY: J.SIEGELMAN/PIC INC./TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

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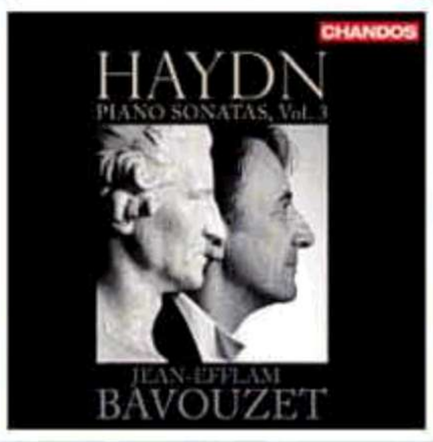
Disc of the Month

Bartók

Hailed as 'the Jascha Heifetz of our day', James Ehnes is the soloist in the Violin and Viola Concertos by Bartók, accompanied by the BBC Philharmonic under Gianandrea Noseda. He himself writes: 'These three concertos are among the most striking examples of Bartók's early, middle, and late periods, each showing a very different side to one of the great musical voices of all time; they are among my very favourite pieces to perform'.

CHAN 10690

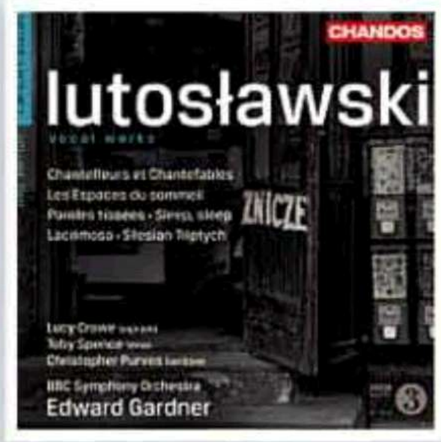
CHANDOS New Releases



Haydn Sonatas, Vol. 3

The multi-award-winning pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet continues his great survey of Haydn's piano sonatas. This is Volume 3 in a series, of which *The Times* wrote: 'Who is the best composer for refreshing the spirit and making you laugh? Haydn, of course, especially when in the hands of a pianist like Bavouzet, another master of delight'.

CHAN 10689



Lutoslawski, Vocal Works

The BBC Symphony Orchestra and Edward Gardner are joined by the soloists Toby Spence, Lucy Crowe, and Christopher Purves in some of Lutoslawski's earlier works for voice and orchestra, as well as three major works written after 1960: *Paroles tissées*, *Les Espaces du sommeil* and *Chantefleurs et Chantefables*.

CHAN 10688



Wagner, Vol. 4

Neeme Järvi conducts the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in their fourth volume of orchestral music by Wagner. This programme combines the arrangement by Henk de Vlieger of music from *Die Meistersinger* with Wagner's unfinished *Entreactes tragiques* (completed by De Vlieger), *Eine Faust-Ouvertüre*, and the seldom performed and recorded *Columbus* overture.

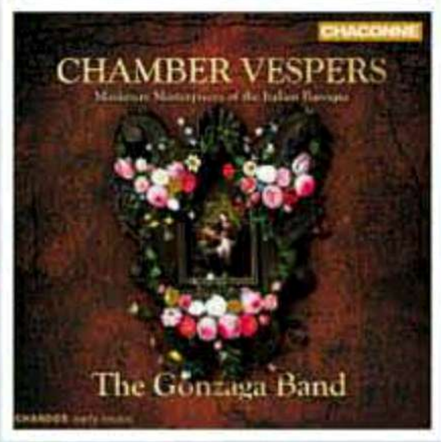
CHSA 5092



Schwertsik

The music of Kurt Schwertsik is characterised by a highly individual exploration of tonality and sense of musical irony. His most recent work is *Nachtmusiken*, of 2010, a series of urban nocturnes in a seductive mix of passion and melancholy that will grip and hold captive the listener from start to finish. Performed by the BBC Philharmonic under HK Gruber.

CHAN 10687



Chamber Vespers

The Gonzaga Band is joined by the mezzo-soprano Clare Wilkinson and cornettist Gawain Glenton in an exploration of seventeenth-century sacred music. Traditionally written for small groups of singers and instrumentalists, the works on this disc would have been heard during 'The Devine Vespers', a service of evening prayer in the Roman-Catholic Church.

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THE TRIAL

Iconic recordings reassessed



On trial this month, **Mitsuko Uchida's Schubert Piano Sonata No 21**, from the 1998 recording that contributed to her reputation as 'one of the supreme Schubert pianists'

PROSECUTION: DAVID THREASHER

'That pianissimo for which she is renowned seems to me more like an attention-seeking device, mistaking mere quietude for expressivity'

The case against



Your Editorial Honour, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, it is with not a little apprehension that I stand before you today. For in the dock is a stalwart of the concert scene throughout the world, a chamber-music collaborator with the finest of her peers, a tireless supporter of those making their first steps along the perilous path to classical fame; a pianist whose shelves must groan under the weight of the accolades her recordings have brought her. Not only that but, in prosecuting this adored veteran of stage and studio, I come up against the opinions of men who are not only respected critics and admired colleagues but also beloved friends.

Barely a word has been written that contradicts the esteem in which she is held. You will search in vain for a dissenting view. But I wonder if Mitsuko Uchida has now become one of those artists – I think also of Barenboim or Abbado – whose name speaks louder than their music-making, whose shortcomings are waved away as trivial in the face of a perceived star quality.

Allow me to demonstrate through specific examples from her much-lauded recording of the final piano sonata of Schubert. My learned friend Bryce Morrison (and I yield to no one in my appreciation of his pinpoint perspicacity) isolates her "precision" and "finesse". Listen though, for instance, to the work's closing seconds, to the unseemly hash she makes of the work's sprint to the finish (not to mention at least a couple of missed notes). Earlier in the movement there is some jiggery-pokery around four minutes in, where the thickets of notes are barely untangled. Turn to Leif Ove Andsnes for a touch of authority here, or to Imogen Cooper for a sure sense of everything being just in its place.

Again, not far from the work's opening, as the music makes its first plunge into other-worldly remoteness and the key of F sharp minor, there is a choppiness to the insistent commentary of those inner-voice repeated notes that is absent from, say, Radu Lupu's reading. Now this is one of the (admittedly few) masterpieces of the Romantic piano repertoire that I can play with some accuracy, even artistry, and I well remember the hours spent rehearsing those inner voices so they were utterly even, neither too strong nor weak, but made their point without overpowering the melodies in left and right hand. Gone are the days of the ruler over the knuckles – but it's there in spirit, Ms Uchida.

So much for precision. Take the "rare insight and spirituality" identified by Richard Wigmore in his original review and apply that to the transition passage to the repeat of the first movement's exposition. When has it ever been played more headbangingly literally, more prosaically? The Brendelistas follow to a man their master's injunction not to play that important repeat: Uchida's reading is perhaps the one example where you wish she *wouldn't* play it.



Radu Lupu: his reading has a playfulness

Then there is that *pianissimo* for which she is renowned but which seems to me more like an attention-seeking device, mistaking mere quietude for some supposedly insightful expressivity. This B flat Sonata has none of the epic implacability of Stephen Kovacevich; none of the, yes, playfulness that Radu Lupu finds within it; none of the essential humanity that makes Schnabel so compelling. As with her Mozart, she seems not to be playing to the core of the music but offering a translation of some carapace, rendering it as frozen as a Meissen porcelain doll.

Believe me, I have tried to hear what others hear in Uchida's music-making. I have searched in vain for what makes her recordings so admired. I have followed her with Beethoven and Schubert; marvelled at how Schumann's *Fantasie* defeats her interpretatively as surely as it does physically; mourned her stillborn Debussy. Music lovers, I implore you, please listen not to the name or reputation but to what is presented as prima facie evidence on these plastic-coated aluminium discs.

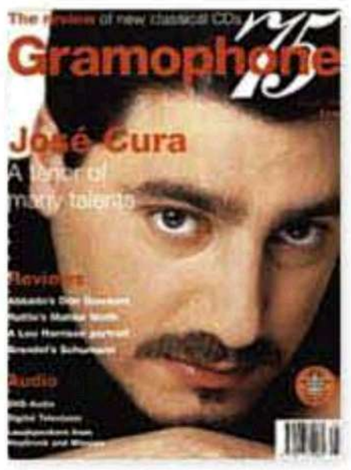
David Threasher is a critic, writer, editor and sometime pianist and co-editor (with James Jolly) of The Gramophone Classical Music Guide 2012

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Our review from August 1998

"[No other pianist] probes more hauntingly the music's mysterious contemplative ecstasy or creates such as sense of inspired improvisation. And her limpid *cantabile* sonorities are always ravishing on the ear."

(Richard Wigmore)

Schubert Piano Sonata No 21, D960

Drei Klavierstücke, D946

Philips Ⓢ Ⓐ 475 6282PB8

DEFENCE: BRYCE MORRISON

'For me, she captures that final resolution of previous pain and anxiety in a glory of exultance'

The case for



Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, my learned friend's presentation may have been late in coming but it was well worth the wait. So may I start by congratulating him on his taut and eloquent argument, where his love (no more than mine) of one of the great masterpieces of music shines out in every word. Yet my difficulty is this: my colleague makes me recall a reply made by CS Lewis to an incendiary attack on Milton's verse by the formidable Dr Leavis. There, he said, "we read the same things, but I love what he dislikes". My learned colleague and I do, for the most part, hear the same things. But it is here that a no less sharp division occurs. Let me pinpoint and I hope adequately paraphrase his case. For him Dame Mitsuko (as we must now call her) imposes an alien sophistication, an elaborate show of profundity, on music whose magical and profound inner secrets can be revealed only by an essential simplicity. For him Uchida is hardly one of those musicians who, while appearing to do nothing, end up achieving everything. Her work is over-refined, over-worked. To put it crudely, she squeezes the last ounce out of every expressive phrase like so much toothpaste. There is too much tinting and tweaking, a way of edging in and out of her multi-layered sonority so that finally a cloud of pseudo-reverential incense envelops us, making us long for a fresher, more natural climate.



Dame Mitsuko: her Schubert is a testament of faith

Less generally, my learned friend takes issue with what he sees as Uchida's final sprint to the finishing line which he, exaggeratedly, calls an "unseemly hash". Yes, it is not perfect and yet Uchida may well have replied, like Schnabel, "I could play it more accurately but I couldn't play it better." For me she captures that final resolution of previous pain and anxiety in a glory of exultance. Less relevantly, my learned friend's dig at Uchida's way with the vexed question of the first-movement repeat (to play or not to play) seems to me more naughty than accurate, a witty if mischievous aside. Again, I am second to none in my admiration for what my colleague so finely calls Stephen Kovacevich's "epic implacability" or the wonder of Radu Lupu's inimitable but lightly worn radiance and insight. But there are many roads to Vienna and I was constantly struck by Uchida's penetration to that shifting ambivalence at the heart of Schubert's genius.

Try as he may, my colleague balks at Uchida's approach. And did I detect a touch of envy for an artist whose playing is so far from the amateur as to make the gap seem immeasurable? For him, Uchida is a problem. He even takes issue with what he describes as her "stillborn Debussy" when it is surely of a nervous intensity and brio given to very few. How he would warm to a celebrated pianist who recently asked me, "does Uchida ever play naturally?" (though he qualified his brash comment on hearing her record of the Schubert).

So may I end, having no doubt reduced my respected colleague to apoplexy, by saying that I relish and understand his argument. And, ignoring his blush-making tribute to my own work, say, quite simply, that I am grateful for difference, for the infinite variety prompted by the greatest music. I am sure, too, that my learned colleague will agree that the days when Rachmaninov remained oblivious to the existence of the Schubert sonatas, a time when they were considered "genial, mellow and sentimental" is long past. Today we argue, point-counter-point, about the interpretation of Schubert's vision and profundity. For me Uchida's Schubert is a testament of faith; for him it is a testament of artifice, unforgivably more Uchida than Schubert. And so I rest my case and ask our jury to weigh judiciously the several points and counter-points of our discussion (a term I prefer, even given our "legal" context) concerning music by a child of nature who was for many its greatest, most transcendental visionary. G

Bryce Morrison is a professor at the Royal Academy of Music and has been a jury member at more than 60 international piano competitions

PHOTOGRAPHY: SUZIE MAEDER/LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS

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BIOGRAPHY OF AN INSTRUMENT

William Carter's 19th-century-style guitar

Martin Cullingford talks to the guitarist about his instrument, built along Romantic lines

"Never in my life have I heard a guitarist whose playing was supportable if he played with the nails." The words of guitarist and composer Fernando Sor (1778-1839), and somewhat definite ones, we might think.



'Guitars don't stand the test of time as well as violins'

For non-guitarists among you, here's the issue: prior to the mid to late 19th century, guitarists played using the flesh tips of their fingers to strike the strings; from the 20th century onwards they have used nails. The guitar evolved, becoming larger, with greater string tension, all of which allowed for more powerful – and louder – sonic possibilities. And so Sor's music almost invariably reaches listeners today via musicians who use nails.

This is where Baroque guitarist William Carter comes in. His latest disc (reviewed on page 88) is the second of two superb recordings of Sor's music for Linn Records, played in the way Sor intended. But there are two problems. "If you try to play a modern guitar without nails it's actually very difficult – it's just like trying to lift weights really. While not the same, it's like a harpsichord versus piano – the earlier instrument speaks quicker, it gives what it has to give quicker." Secondly, "I don't know exactly why, but it seems that guitars very often don't stand the test of time as well as the violin or cello."

Carter set about exploring the sort of guitars Sor had liked, playing them when he had the chance. "I learnt something from all of the instruments I played – even the ones that seemed the most fragile and most damaged. It teaches your hands and your ears something that is hard to put into words."

He then commissioned luthier Tony Johnson to make a new instrument, based on the principles of the earlier-19th-century guitars, which tend to have a lighter construction than modern instruments and different bracing (the struts underneath the soundboard that stop it from collapsing under the tension of the strings). In the mid 19th century, the great guitar maker Antonio Torres developed the fan strutting system mainly used today. For Carter's guitar, however, Johnson used a lattice system, found on some earlier French instruments (and, incidentally, being revived by some modern makers too). "It allows the top to be thin but supported, and allows me to play without fingernails more easily," says Carter.

The picture shows Johnson's guitar to be a quite exquisite instrument, while Carter's recording reveals it to have a beautiful, delicate tone. "The guitar does all the things that I need it to do but it does have such an intimate quality that it made me dare to programme several pieces together which are all intimate and reflective. The instrument just seemed to want to do that, and to lead me to want to do that." G



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QUIZ

Who am I?

Pit your wits against Gramophone



Quintessentially English: the surroundings in which I might be found

I have grown up in relative isolation, far away from my uncle and guardian, who lives in London and is too busy to care for me.

Although my locale could be described as quintessentially English, I owe my existence to somebody who hailed from the other side of the pond.

In my musical form, I made my debut abroad. Since then I have regularly appeared on numerous stages around the world.

Despite my angelic demeanour and tender years, the music written for me is notoriously difficult – a mixture of tonality and dissonance – so, in productions, I am often played by an adult singer.

Afflicted by a somewhat Gothic peculiarity, I am a strange individual – there are those who question my mental stability and fear that I may succumb to the malevolent influences that gather around me.



Who was responsible for my peculiarities?

PHOTOGRAPHY: WILLIAM VANDER WEYDE/GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE/GETTY IMAGES, INCAMERASTOCK/ALAMY

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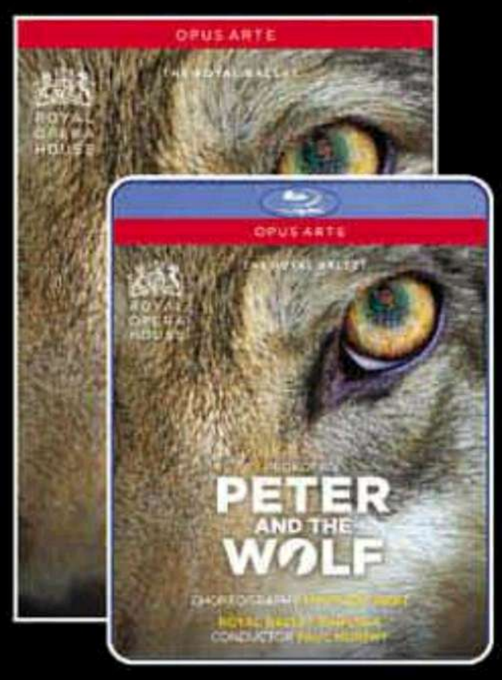
NEW RELEASES



JANÁČEK
Jenůfa
Teatro Real, Madrid

The vulnerable young woman at the heart of Janáček's breakthrough opera is a signature role for the award-winning English soprano Amanda Roocroft. She is partnered by the Slovak tenor Miroslav Dvorsky, as the man through whom she finds redemption, love and hope.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



PROKOFIEV
Peter and the Wolf
Royal Opera House

Peter and the Wolf, Prokofiev's musical fairy tale, has been delighting children since 1936. Nearly 60 years later, in 1995, the young choreographer Matthew Hart created a witty choreographed version for the Royal Ballet School with designs by Ian Spurling.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



VERDI
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From *Beethoven,* the future

Beethoven's symphonies changed everything. So much so that it has taken Riccardo Chailly years to prepare himself to record them. Now, he tells **Philip Clark**, he fully understands just how influential they have been and still are

ILLUSTRATION BY MARTIN O'NEILL

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Ludwig van Beethoven, the composer who, more than any other, changed music, the sound of music and what it is that composers do, wrote nine symphonies that jolted music out of itself. Life could never – would never – be the same again. The "classical" rationality of structure, harmony, form, melodic development and orchestration span into open-ended possibility. And, nearly 200 years after his death, no one expects the pieces to settle down again any time soon.

This much we know; but how exactly did Beethoven's symphonies shift the terrain so absolutely? Riccardo Chailly's convivial, knowing smile as we sit down to talk in the music room of his Milan home tells me that this is a man with answers. There's plenty to smile about: at 58, he's about to release his first complete cycle of Beethoven symphonies, recorded over three seasons with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Not only that, they then go on tour with the cycle, taking in Leipzig, Vienna and Paris before concluding in London at the Barbican on November 3. This is an ensemble, remember, that not only stakes a claim to being the world's oldest, but which played the first complete cycle of Beethoven symphonies during the composer's lifetime, and is proud to call Chailly its current Gewandhauskapellmeister.

And get this. Chailly is the orchestra's 19th Gewandhauskapellmeister; its fifth was Mendelssohn and today's artistic descendent of The Incomparable Felix is presently cracking jokes at the expense of my Ronnie Corbett-size digital recorder. "Inversamente proporzionale!" Chailly belly-laughs. "Does that tiny machine really have the capacity to contain every idea provoked by a discussion of Beethoven symphonies?" Two hours later, the machine's hanging on in there as we break for lunch. Retracing our steps back towards the dining room in Casa Chailly, he explains how walls were demolished to house floor-to-high ceiling shelving units now stuffed with the necessaries of his working life: music, composer critical studies, treatises about the art of conducting. Open-plan rooms roll through each other like a Brooklyn railroad apartment and I catch glimpses of scores, encased witnesses to Chailly's career: Verdi, Maderna, Mahler, Stravinsky, Varèse, Frank Zappa's "The Yellow Shark"…all, unexpectedly, emphasising the centrality of Beethoven. Because no matter how far back history takes you, or how deeply Edgard Varèse defies space-time continuums, beaming us up into a music that is forever the future, Beethoven is the tradition that tells us tradition must be protected from itself; that the most traditional thing about tradition is its radical soul.

Later, as I transcribe the interview tapes, I'm struck by the realisation that Chailly always substitutes "integrated" for my word "complete" when I'm describing his cycle. If this is a quirk of how Italian back-translates into English, the symbolism is still appropriate.

"My way of approaching Beethoven symphonies has always been to view them as a total work," he explains, "which is not to say they all must be performed each time, but rather they are conceived as an *opus magnum*." How does giving the down-beat for the First Symphony's *Adagio molto* introduction, while keeping the Ninth's choral summation in mind, shape the idea of a "cycle" – an "integrated cycle" – rather than an anthology of nine self-contained performances?

"This gigantic ride, so long, so difficult, needs to be shaped logically; thinking about all the symphonies distributes that logic."

Later we cut into how exactly Beethoven changed music and how vital the idea of "a cycle" was to him. But to set the scene I want to know about the concepts, obsessions, sonic contours of Chailly's Beethoven. Indeed, does the world need another Beethoven cycle right now? With recent sets from Chailly's erstwhile boss, Claudio Abbado, from Simon Rattle and the newly released Chambre Philharmonique cycle under Emmanuel Krivine – described by a former reviews editor of this magazine, James McCarthy, as containing a "mini revelation" inside each bar – some might reasonably conclude that we're all Beethovened out. Over a getting-to-know-you lunch, I tell Chailly how much I've been enjoying the soufflé lightness of Giulini's *Eroica*, Fifth and *Pastoral* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Giulini and the sound of the LAPO is an intriguing combination, Chailly thinks, but a radically different vision of Beethoven from his. He nearly drops his knife and fork when I mention my admiration for Bernstein's Beethoven but accepts my point about the potency of Bernstein's personal vision.

The vanguard, as Chailly sees it, starts with Karajan's 1960s recordings and arrives in the 1990s at the twin peaks of David Zinman with the Zürich Tonhalle Orchestra and John Eliot Gardiner's Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique. Chailly's view was informed by their spadework, and by two conceptual starting points: he decided to perform everything at precisely Beethoven's metronome mark and to resist the current orthodoxy of performing from Jonathan Del Mar's new Beethoven edition (which nevertheless Chailly finds "very beautiful, very interesting and certainly very revealing") and return instead to the edition Peters published at the end of the 19th century.

"We know from later editions that Beethoven's markings were often misunderstood," Chailly tells me, "and this Peters Edition, which was

Influenced by The Nine:

Schubert Symphony No 9, D944 (1826)



Completed the year before Beethoven's death, Schubert's Great C major Symphony was, to square this circle of influences, thought by Schumann to be the greatest symphony since Beethoven's nine. Early in his career, Schubert doubted "anyone can do anything after Beethoven" and hesitatingly dedicated his *Variations on a French Song*, D624, to him, a puzzle because the piece had only minimal surface similarity to Beethoven. But Schubert was scooping his own compositional identity from Beethoven. The Ninth, written five years later, finds him grappling with what it means to write a symphony. Schubert's resplendent horn introduction lays it on the line, and a surreal harmonic fissure in the finale makes it feel like the music is leaping 100 years into the future.

Recommended recording
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Harnoncourt
Warner Classics Ⓑ ④
2564 62323-2

'After the first rehearsal of the First Symphony, the orchestra didn't know what to think, or where to put themselves, but then they understood the challenge'

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the second one they printed, was regarded as the most faithful to his intentions. Articulation and dynamics are crucial in Beethoven and the markings are extremely detailed." Different *staccato* marks et al are clearly delineated? "Yes. That's a very important distinction – between a normal *staccato*, notated as a dot, and *staccatissimo*, which is written like an arrowhead. And also this edition is rich in dynamics – the shapes of dynamics, sudden dynamics."

Chailly recalls drooling over George Szell's scores of the Beethoven symphonies when he was guest conductor with the Cleveland Orchestra, and seeing wisdom shine through the pages. "After studying his scores, I discovered how much the conductor needs to interfere with dynamics to achieve even more clarity within the text." Interfere with dynamics to achieve an internal balance on a modern orchestra? "Yes, but never by adding instruments; I don't like this tradition of doubling the woodwind or brass. Having a relatively large string section in Leipzig, I need to work even harder on dynamics to balance the original shape of the wind and brass, which originally would have been heard against a much smaller string section. The power of the strings is a dominant element in the sensational personal sound of the Gewandhaus Orchestra; this way of dealing with dynamics was part of the shock with the orchestra."

The other upset is, of course, Chailly's daringly literal approach to tempo, which aims a dirty bomb at the face of mannered, polite, tailored Beethoven. "After the first rehearsal of the First Symphony, the orchestra didn't know what to think, or where to put themselves, but then they understood the challenge – this is how it's going to be for the next three seasons.

"But all I did was choose the tempo Beethoven wrote in the score! The finale of the Eighth is basically on the edge of playability at Beethoven's tempo. To articulate those double triplets on the strings, we needed to train for special clarity." Chailly attempts to sing the same passage, stumbles, laughs. Point made. "The first movement, too, is magnificent to do all *alla breve* instead of in the usual 3." Chailly's *bel canto* voice tongue-lashes the Eighth's opening phrase, ending with a surprise *diminuendo* where most conductors stress the final chord. His *diminuendo*, he says, asks: what's next? "The *Andante* of the First Symphony, at Beethoven's tempo, radically changes the dimensions of the whole movement. It condenses the perfect shape of Beethoven's sonata form, and instead of the traditional fast 3/8, it is all in 1, which gives it the character of a Baroque minuet." And the dancing-through-your-bones finale of the Seventh? At Beethoven's tempo? "That's actually a human tempo already. There are many notes but it is to be conducted all in 1. Actually, it's often done much faster than is written." The exception that proves the rule.

Velocity, tempo, speed, attack. Viscerally invigorating, intellectually stimulating, but in itself an interpretation? I wonder how Chailly's tempo choices trickle into other musical parameters. If we're talking about how music was never the same again after Beethoven, there's a problem. Harmony has a dynamic function in Beethoven. But, in life, Beethoven's harmonies have become habitual, accepted, robbed of their capacity to crash the threshold. Music we love listening to. Music we don't necessarily hear. Classics for pleasure. Could reconnecting Beethoven's symphonies with Beethoven's tempi reconnect us with Beethoven's harmonic sting? "The change of gear between harmonies is even more tangible at these tempi," Chailly nods. "In the first movement of the Eighth, where the harmony changes all the time, the tempo – *his* tempo – shows the instability of the harmony. Compare this to Haydn or Mozart: in the moment of harmonic change you jump with surprise; but Beethoven exists in a constant state of change."

Tonal instability is my pet fascination. How come Beethoven was the

Influenced by The Nine:

Schumann Fantasie in C major, Op 17 (1836)



A monument to Beethoven – literally. The roots of Schumann's *Fantasie* date back to 1836, when Schumann composed a piano work to help lobby for funds to build a statue dedicated to Beethoven in Bonn, his home town.

Allusions to Beethoven are embossed into its fabric: a quote from Beethoven's song-cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* was slipped into the coda of the first movement seemingly without anybody noticing at the time; the message secreted inside the words, "Accept these songs, beloved, which I sang for you alone", was a subliminal one directed at Clara.

Originally, the finale was going to riff on Beethoven's Seventh Symphony but Schumann had second thoughts; nevertheless, ghostly traces of Beethoven's slow movement remain in the bass though.

Recommended recording
Pollini DG Ⓑ 447 451-2GOR



Chailly: 'Beethoven is in a constant state of change'

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composer who changed music more than anybody since Papa Bach? Was it because harmonic development was no longer contained by structure, but rippled through to change the structure? Fire finding its form, as William Blake put it, a direct historical line that led eventually to everything that happened in the wake of serialism, towards the spectral composition of Iancu Dumitrescu and Horaţiu Rădulescu, where strategies are deployed to make instruments themselves unstable, to Ornette Coleman's harmolodics (rhythm, harmony, melody given equality within the unfolding structure) and the self-termed "non-idiomatic" guitar improvisations of Derek Bailey? That would be a nice story to tell but history has its history too. Ives and Tippett said plenty about Beethoven, but Schoenberg and Stravinsky, figures destined to power the motor of 20th-century revolution, had surprisingly little to say. Stravinsky distrusted the Beethovenian spirit. John Cage heard emotional manipulation inside Beethoven's music and spoke out against it given even half a chance. And composers who responded to Beethoven's challenges via reconstituted Beethovenian forms were always doomed. Rationalising instability? What's the point?

Chailly is well placed to discuss the contemporary resonance of Beethoven. His father was the composer Luciano Chailly, an intimate of Luigi Nono and Luciano Berio. In 2004 Radio Netherlands issued a 13-CD box documenting Chailly's 16 years as principle conductor of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra: Bartók, Stravinsky, Berio, Maderna, Rihm, Peter Schat and Tristan Keuris are filed alongside performances

Influenced by The Nine:

Brahms Symphony No 1 (1876)



After its two-decade gestation, is Brahms's Symphony No 1 really, as the conductor Hans von Bülow famously described it, "Beethoven's Tenth"? Well, von Bülow was one of Brahms's most enthusiastic supporters but he's right only in the sense that Beethoven's First is "Haydn 105" or "Mozart 42".

Beethoven was the undeniable stylistic spur: the symphony's four-movement construct, including its "listen up" prologue, is a chip off the Beethovenian block; the melodic contours of Brahms's finale seem traced over the equivalent moment in Beethoven's Ninth and the persistent "der der der DA" rhythmic rap is hardly unfamiliar. Yet those same melodic contours, the harmonic conflict birthed in the opening, the sound of the orchestration, could only be Brahms. Beethoven has been entirely distilled.

Recommended recording
ORR / Gardiner
SDG Ⓕ SDG702



Chailly: 'Beethoven was a barrier-breaker'



In Beethoven's footsteps

Some major composers influenced by Beethoven's symphonies – and how



Schubert 1797-1828
Felt imprisoned as much as inspired by Beethoven's inescapable shadow



Schumann 1810-1856
Channelled the anxiety and joy of the Nine; Beethoven was a constant presence



Liszt 1811-1886
Beethoven as superstar was Liszt's model for his own triumphant career

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of Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Verdi, Mahler and a headbanging Beethoven Symphony No 2 without fuss. Chailly's 1998 cycle of the complete Varèse outguns any rival. He plays new music like it's already classic, classical music like it's mint fresh. What does he think subsequent composers took from Beethoven's harmonic instability? No hesitation: Robert Schumann is the first that comes to Chailly's mind.

"What Schumann created in his universe was a direct consequence of Beethoven," Chailly enthuses. "He was a deep studier of Beethoven and the emperor of harmonic instability. He would go to Gewandhaus Orchestra concerts when he was living in Leipzig and making his living as a critic. When Mendelssohn conducted the Beethoven symphonies, Schumann regularly criticised his tempi. But I think Mendelssohn initiated the way that brought us to Gardiner and Zinman.

"Schumann's *Manfred* Overture is breathtakingly unstable. By the end, you can't take it any more because of the anxiety his tonal instability gives. I hear in *Manfred* a dramatic, monolithic dark mood, a sense of obsession, territory that Beethoven opened up in his *Coriolan* Overture." And how did Schumann process the joyful side of Beethoven's art? "Well, the first movement of the *Spring* Symphony is filled with freshness, humour even, the finale too. The shadows and clouds only arrive with the Second Symphony." And talking of overtures – the set includes five overtures, positioned in chronological order around the symphonies – Chailly perceives other points of departure: "I think Richard Strauss's tone-poem concept starts with *Leonore* No 3.

Influenced by The Nine:

Ives Concord Sonata (1915)



Ives's *Concord* Sonata is a meditation on "the spirit of transcendentalism associated in the minds of many with Concord, Massachusetts", a reference to such philosophers as Emerson and Thoreau. But among a trademark Ivesian collage of American folk tunes, hymns and marches, the opening bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony are obsessively recalled and re-contextualised.

To Ives, Beethoven's music transcended our understanding of what music could be; the opening of Beethoven's Fifth, the most recognisable hook in all classical music, is "dematerialised" by Ives into an open-ended question mark. The addition of obbligato flute and viola parts – in a piano sonata! – implies the format itself must be transcended. And Beethoven is the key.

Recommended recording
Varied Air: Charles Ives Piano Music *Philip Mead*
Metier Ⓕ ② MSVCD92037

'When Mendelssohn conducted Beethoven symphonies, Schumann criticised his tempi. But I think Mendelssohn initiated the way that brought us to Gardiner and Zinman'

Beethoven's overture is a condensed version of the whole of *Fidelio*; everything, every character, is there. Strauss tone-poems like *Don Juan* and *Till Eulenspiegel* are the children of *Leonore* No 3, reborn, developed of course, but all beginning from Beethoven."

As I suggest Chailly's thoughts about Schumann upset the perceived wisdom of a Beethoven-Brahms-Schoenberg historical lineage, he slides a book off his shelf about the relationship of later composers to the *Choral* Symphony. Documenting Mahler's retouching of the Ninth's orchestration, the book also includes a section devoted to Schoenberg, and I see first-hand his analysis of the fifth movement's opening bars and his additional brass parts. "Schoenberg absolutely understood the core message of Beethoven's music, but you're right, it's forgotten how strong Schoenberg's interest in his music was. The link between Brahms and Schoenberg is audible but you don't hear direct traces of Beethoven in Schoenberg. But, looking at this, I see how analytical was his understanding of Beethoven. I hear very close links between Brahms and Mendelssohn in their perfection of form. But Beethoven and Schumann were both barrier-breakers in terms of form, in their limitless wish to expand the barriers of tonality." Given that Stravinsky's credo was to expand tonality's barriers without, until the last years of his life, trashing them altogether, his naked antipathy towards Beethoven was one of his characteristic foibles, although nothing compared with Cage's downright hostility. Eric Walter White, Stravinsky's biographer, thought his attitude was "of a creator and not a critic"; Cage rained on long-cherished ideas about Beethoven with parades of benevolent ridicule suggesting that his music was no longer "useful" creatively, sounding, as it did, like "movie music, constantly changing its emotional suggestions". Apropos Stravinsky and Beethoven, Chailly thinks that programming their work together is, paradoxically, always successful because of their sharp attack and the "uncompromising character of both styles". And Cage? "That's very Cage what you say! But I disagree in the sense that Beethoven, as a logical builder of harmonies, is so advanced compared with even half a century earlier, that it remains alarmingly new. And we must not forget that Cage wanted to provoke extreme reactions."

To love music can be to hate music, and that's fine. Stravinsky and Cage needed Beethoven – who drove the idea of functional, arrow-headed directional harmony beyond the sublime – as a conflict to be worked through as they found their art: Stravinsky's neo-classicism, Cage's so-called anarchic harmony, where sounds were allowed autonomy from narrative targets and the need to obey an internally consistent grammar. Great composers do more than refresh music; they create new contexts for harmony. Beethoven created his, Stravinsky and Cage theirs.

As our conversation turns to the narrative content of Beethoven's symphonies, Chailly cites the slow movements of the *Eroica*, *Pastoral* and *Choral* symphonies as moments that changed music for good. He talks

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Believed opera should follow the ideas embodied in Beethoven's Ninth



Brahms 1833-1897
Using Beethoven's structures, helped establish them as the language of symphonies



Mahler 1860-1911
The *Eroica* as musical autobiography – Mahler pushed that concept



Stravinsky 1882-1971
The Russian felt he had no choice but to recreate Beethoven's forms

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Jools Holland has always loved music of every kind and during his illustrious musical career he's bought and collected 100s and 100s of CDs and albums many of which he continues to play on his weekly radio show. Trouble was, the space they took up, keeping them in some sort of order, the need to find a certain album and then a particular track was always hugely time consuming.

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Jools Holland pianist, bandleader, composer, singer and television host. He was a founder of Squeeze and the multi-million selling Rhythm and Blues Orchestra. He has collaborated with many artists including Sting, Eric Clapton, George Harrison, B.B.King, David Gilmour, Amy Winehouse and Bono. He tours regularly with his Rhythm & Blues Band and currently hosts 'Later...with Jools Holland' on BBC2.



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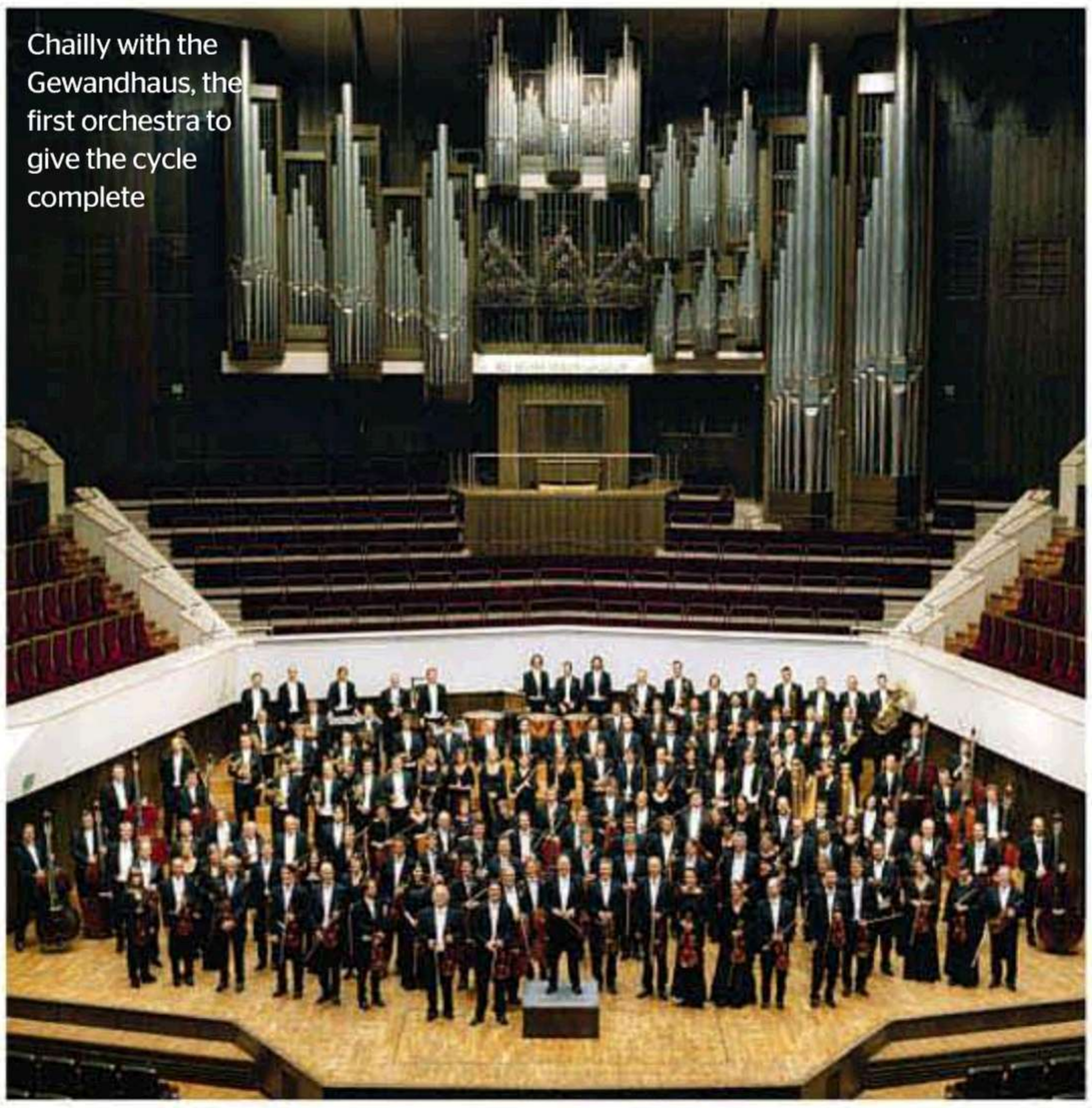
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Chailly with the Gewandhaus, the first orchestra to give the cycle complete

Influenced by The Nine:

Mauricio Kagel Ludwig van (1970)



Ludwig van exists as both film and spin-off instrumental work. Mauricio Kagel's original film was a backhanded tribute for the 1970 Beethoven bicentenary, where Beethoven himself arrives at Bonn Station to see how the culture industry is treating his memory.

The most famous scene is shot in Beethoven's music room: the camera pans slowly around the room where every surface is pasted in fragments of Beethoven scores. As the camera moves, an ensemble plays these scraps haphazardly, and we hear Beethoven with the syntax removed; familiar phrases trip over one another, gestures are remade as fresh sources of sound. Kagel made a concert version of the music room scene, but his original film remains provocative and refreshing.

Recommended recording
The Mauricio Kagel Edition
Winter & Winter Ⓕ 910 128-2

about the "triumph of the horizontal shape of the score" (as opposed to vertical harmony) and about "the endless shape of the narrative from the first to last bar." A paradox of the Fifth Symphony is, I suggest, that the directness of its emotional impact is counterpointed against its labyrinthine narrative structure: material plunges through trapdoors, new windows are there all of a sudden, like internet pop-ups, the narrative direction is no longer solidly A to B.

"This reminds me that, for Mahler, Beethoven was the master," Chailly responds. "If you compare any of those slow movements I mentioned to the *Andante* of Mahler's Sixth, you can hear how Mahler develops the idea of the so-called 'endless melody'. Mahler is entranced by Beethoven's endless fantasy. Think for a moment of all the beginnings of Mahler's symphonies – and I include the 10th and *Das Lied von der Erde* in that; just think about, say, the first four bars and how Mahler never copied himself. Even when he used a funeral march to spark his creativity, it was never the same. Now do the same thing for Beethoven's nine symphonies and notice how each one is different; how in the *Eroica* and Fifth, there is no need for an introduction; how in the Fourth Beethoven has this long, elaborate introduction.

"Hypothetically, my ideal would be to play the nine symphonies non-stop. I have analysed the end of one symphony and the start of the next, and then you see a certain logic emerge; one symphony follows the previous one with a different tonality, shape and character. But all the symphonies belong to this unity of one oeuvre, one opus. Mahler learnt to do the same from Beethoven."

Having chased Beethoven's legacy towards the Cageian brink, Chailly's words remind me again of another composer with which he is strongly associated: Edgard Varèse. Like Beethoven's symphonies, Varèse's major orchestral works – *Amériques*, *Arcana*, *Déserts* – are a unified oeuvre defined by how alike and unlike they are: as alike and unlike as trees. Like Beethoven, Varèse elbowed his way past protocols of traditional form, forms that Beethoven himself established. But I have a vision of Beethoven looking down on Varèse, understanding entirely why he had to destroy to create, and cheerfully waving him on his way.

Chailly's three Barbican concerts take place in October and November, shortly after the release of his cycle. To reinforce the idea of Beethoven as a timeless source of ideas, he has commissioned Colin Matthews, Bruno Mantovani, Steffen Schleiermacher, Friedrich Cerha and Carlo Boccadoro to provide new related satellite works. And I wonder if Beethoven's greatest legacy – a more profound lesson than developing the style and idiom of his notes – was that he called "open sesame", giving composers permission to question the assumed parameters of music. What is music? Why music? How music? Questions only fools would ignore. ◉

The discography explored

Rob Cowan selects four conductors' recordings of Beethoven that draw on other composers – who were themselves inspired by The Nine



VPO; Stockholm PO / Wilhelm Furtwängler
EMI Ⓢ (21 discs)
907878-2
Beethoven's explosive Ninth was in many respects a starting point for Wagner. Furtwängler's Beethoven cycle revolves on a decidedly Wagnerian axis – intuitively volatile, lyrical and infinitely flexible.



Concertgebouw Orch / Willem Mengelberg
Andromeda Ⓢ ⑤
ANDRCD5040
Willem Mengelberg was a friend of Gustav Mahler, a soulmate too, and one senses in Mengelberg's Beethoven a recreative spark and individualistic slant that would surely have been present in Mahler's own Beethoven.



Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch / Kurt Masur
Pentatone Ⓜ ⑤
PTC5186 159
Philips Ⓜ ⑤ 475 272-2PB5
From Mendelssohn's Leipzig, Masur's two cycles exhibit a balance and refined exultation that could definitely be described as Mendelssohnian.



NBC SO / Arturo Toscanini
Music & Arts Ⓜ ⑤ CD1203
Verdi was the Beethoven of Italian opera. The 1939 cycle by Verdi's greatest interpreter, Toscanini, combines elevated drama and warmly singing lines. Every bar is aflame.

Suggest more Beethoven recordings influenced by other composers in the *Gramophone* Forum at www.gramophone.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY: GERT MOTHES, ERICH AUERBACH/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

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‘DID YOU HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE VIOLA PLAYER WHO WAS IN TUNE? NEITHER DID I’

Long dismissed as inferior to the violin, the viola was finally taken seriously as a solo instrument in the early 20th century. Today, writes **Charlotte Smith**, a whole host of young musicians are propelling the instrument to new and unexplored heights

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK SMITH

Perhaps the most maligned and misunderstood instrument of the orchestra, and certainly of the string section, the viola has often been regarded as a poor cousin of the seemingly flashier violin. Musical folklore would have us believe that the viola is unwieldy and dull, capable of nothing more than basic repetitious accompaniment, and that those who choose it for their profession are failed or lazy violinists. Of course, today’s young ambassadors such as David Aaron Carpenter and Maxim Rysanov, building upon the legacy of Lionel Tertis, William Primrose, Yuri Bashmet and Nobuko Imai, belie these assumptions. But is there any truth behind the viola’s less than shining reputation? And how did the favoured instrument of Mozart and Dvořák become the butt of so many musical jokes?

Cecil Forsyth, in his 1914 book *Orchestration*, gives a brutally direct description of the viola’s “limitations”: “a betwixt-and-between instrument imperfect in construction, ‘difficult’ and somewhat uneven in tone-quality and undeniably clumsy to manage.” Early Classical composers, he determines, found the viola “a source of anxiety. We feel that they must have regarded its existence as something in the nature of a prehistoric survival. The instrument was there and had to be written for.” This turn-of-the-century view can be seen as a product of the times. The viola had yet to achieve prominence in its own right. Tertis, the instrument’s first true modern champion, would not record Mozart’s *Sinfonia concertante* with Albert Sammons until the 1920s and it would be another 15 years before Walton wrote his Viola Concerto. As for Primrose, he would not make the switch from violin to viola until 1930.

Yet Forsyth’s two main charges – that the viola is intrinsically flawed and that the repertoire is consequently dull – are ideas that persist today. Certainly, as a middle-range instrument, the viola does not “speak” as easily as the tonally brighter violin. More weight in the bow arm is required to make the viola sound, yet too much weight produces the “strangled” tone that is often associated with inferior playing. “There is no denying the instrument is larger and harder to handle,” says Arcanto Quartet viola player Tabea Zimmermann. “The strings are thicker and the bow heavier, so everything is awkward for the musician.” Not only is there the difficult task of balancing the sound but, as Tertis discovered by adapting Fritz Kreisler’s techniques to the larger instrument, a rich, continuous vibrato is also necessary to draw out the best of its tonal qualities. The viola is therefore less flawed than frequently misunderstood. “There is no smoke without fire,” says Maxim Rysanov. “For some reason there is a tradition that if a violinist isn’t fast enough in the fingers, they can get away with it on the viola.” Yet, to play a viola well requires a good deal of skill and patience.

As William Primrose observed in 1941, “Whenever we hear it said that the viola ranks among the less expressive instruments, we may be sure that the speaker has not had the instrument properly revealed to him. A vicious circle of thought surrounds the viola. One hears it badly played and one draws the conclusion that such an instrument must be highly limited. But even a cheap viola produces a pleasing sound in hands that know how to play it.”

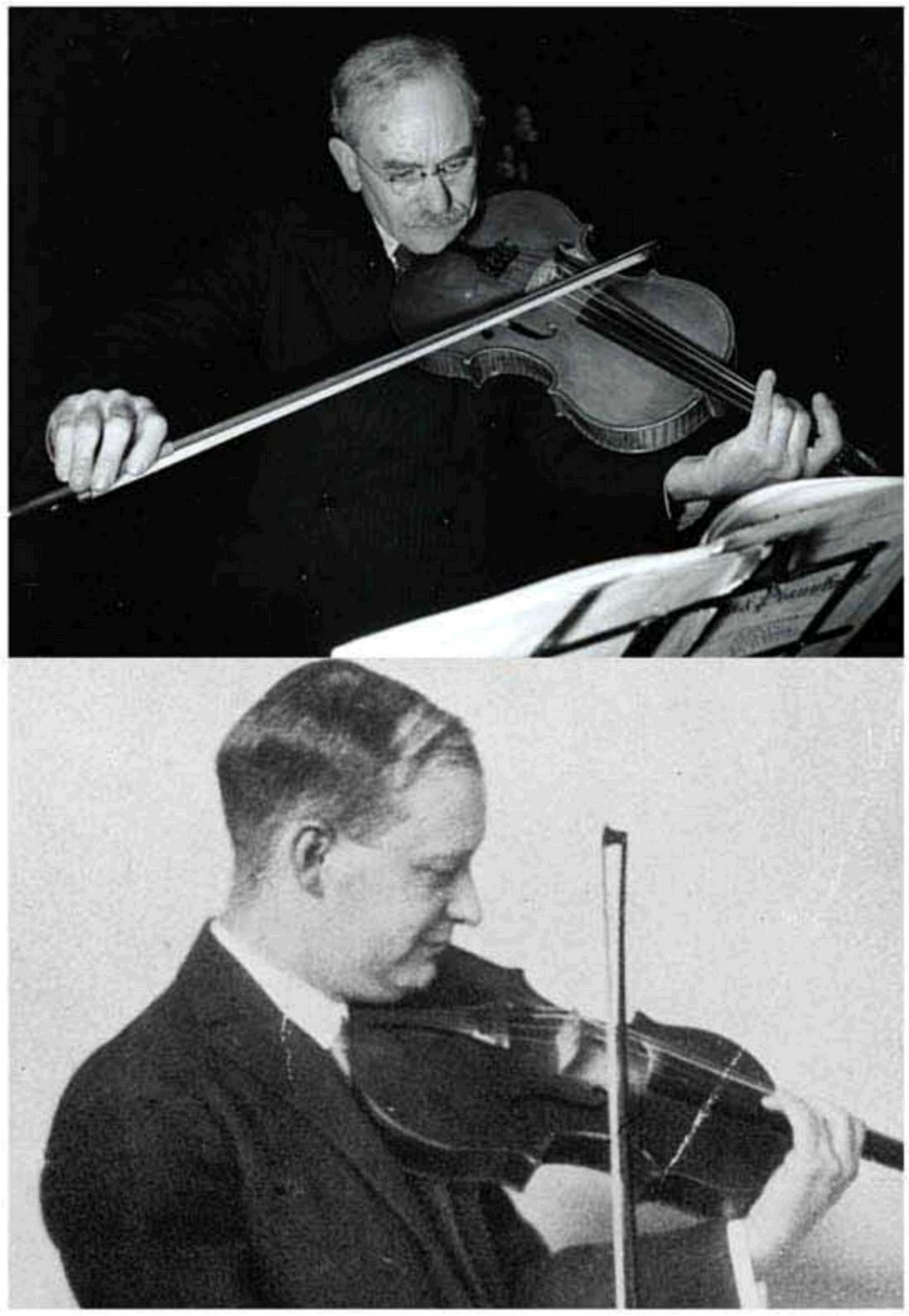
The debate over whether such hands should be larger than those of a violinist is controversial. The viola is undoubtedly weightier than the violin and holding it under the chin is liable to produce stamina issues, which do not apply to the cello or double bass. Do, therefore, a larger physical frame and broader hands help to make the most of the instrument? Yes, says Rysanov: “If a child wishes to play the viola, the teacher should always look at the hand to see how wide and long the fingers are, and at the arm length. When I played the violin before taking up the viola, it was really too small for me.” Yet the Nash Ensemble’s Lawrence Power disagrees: “Every viola player will choose a very different-sized viola because, unlike the violin, the instrument hasn’t ever found an established size. Primrose played quite a small Amati, whereas I can play a larger viola, but they both have equal merit.”

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Pioneers: Lionel Tertis, right, and Paul Hindemith, below

With such disputes still raging, and given the technical difficulties of creating both a pleasing and a strong sound, it is little wonder that, historically, composers have shied away from writing solo works for the instrument. Even with the improved techniques of today, honed through 100 years of experiment and innovation by viola champions, the tone and register of the instrument can experience difficulty sounding above an orchestral accompaniment. Yet its character and middle range can be advantageous, too. For Lawrence Power, the instrument's "wonderful sound, that middle register" is not a hindrance but a "reason to fall in love. Some of the greatest composers – Schubert, Mozart and Dvořák – played the viola and there is something telling about that. In order to write chamber music of the greatest level, you must have an ear in the middle of the texture. As a viola player you can control so much of the colour of an ensemble." The viola's darker tones are in fact perfectly suited to the chamber genre and many first-rate composers have capitalised on this with truly balanced scores for strings and essential parts for viola a world away from the "filler" described by Forsyth.

It is just a shame, says Power, that there weren't any solo viola performers before Tertis and Primrose to "capture the public's imagination with their wonderful playing. The clarinettist Anton Stadler inspired Mozart to write his greatest music for the clarinet. I can only dream that there was a wonderful viola player at the time. Sadly, I don't think there were those characters in history to inspire the greatest composers."

Still, advocates for the instrument did finally arrive in the early 20th century in the shape of British virtuosos Tertis, Primrose and Frederick Riddle. As these pioneers demonstrated the capability and range of the instrument, so composers worked in partnership with them to expand a repertoire formerly confined principally to orchestral and chamber works. Englishmen Arnold Bax, Frank Bridge, Gustav Holst, York Bowen, William Walton and Benjamin Britten all wrote works for the viola. Of course there would be Béla Bartók's famous Concerto, and indeed Paul Hindemith's plethora of viola compositions, but it is possible that Bax et al found something

'You can't argue with the violin's glorious history. Viola players must by necessity be open to less conventional paths to solo success'

intrinsically British in the veiled sensitivity of the instrument which appealed to a national sense of restraint.

Such an exciting time for the viola could come about only with a willingness to embrace experimentation and creativity on the part of its first solo advocates and this is a tendency that continues today. Because of the fact that, as Power says, "you can't argue with the violin's glorious history" and its wealth of exceptional repertoire, viola players must by necessity be open to less conventional paths to solo success. Maxim Rysanov has followed in the footsteps of Tertis, who arranged Elgar's Cello Concerto for viola, by arranging works himself, among them a recording of Bach's Cello Suites and a forthcoming disc of Tchaikovsky's *Rococo* Variations. "If one wants to have a concert career, there must be an element of creativity," he says. "One needs to work hard to build a solo career. It is not necessarily the lack of repertoire available but that the repertoire must be in demand. Violinists have a golden five concertos, which they recycle again and again because they are popular. In my case I have to work harder to fill these gaps."

Power not only performs new compositions but also enjoys unearthing lesser-known works from the past. "I am very interested in playing pieces that have been a bit neglected. Even though the viola's repertoire is seemingly small, I am still up to my ears in music I haven't played before," he says. Not being restricted to a list of popular "greats" can actually lead to a more satisfying sense of career freedom. "Because I don't have the Mendelssohn, Brahms and Tchaikovsky to play, what I do is very project-based, working with particular composers or conductors." He continues: "Of course I am still asked to play the Walton a lot, but I am very lucky in working with Hyperion that I am supported in pursuing some really interesting, unknown viola pieces like the York Bowen Viola Concerto, which I recorded recently."

Tabea Zimmermann agrees: "Sometimes it is just so fascinating to discover new music and I'm sure that as a violinist I wouldn't have had so much experience of contemporary music and ensemble collaborations. True, one could say the diversity is forced upon me, but I'm glad of the challenge to look for new musical niches."

In their willingness to stray from the straight and narrow, Power, Zimmermann and Rysanov demonstrate just how erroneous the idea of the lazy viola player is and how, with a little flexibility, one can forge a career away from the orchestral safety net. Yet Power firmly believes that a chamber music component is a necessary part of any viola career. "I feel that in order to enjoy the inherent qualities of the viola I need to be playing chamber music regularly because otherwise

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Champions: Lawrence Power, left, and Maxim Rysanov, below

I don't get to play Beethoven, Schubert, Mozart and even Brahms essentially," he says. "I have to play those works to nourish me as a musician, so I'm a bit dubious about the idea of a viola soloist."

Power's view concerning the "essential" repertoire and composers begs another question: can a viola player develop a sufficiently polished technique without first honing his skills on the established violin repertoire? And if not, does this imply that the range of viola music available cannot compete with the virtuoso and technical demands of music for violin? Rysanov was taught through the Russian method of string-playing and, although he was always destined, in his mind, to play the viola, his specialist music school insisted that he play the violin up to the age of 14. "The Russian system of playing believes it is a necessity for future viola players to learn certain violin repertoire in order to develop a basic technique," he says.

'It's not a landslide effect but I do believe that nowadays there are more opportunities for serious players than ever before'

Yet Power, a child tall for his age, was steered by his teachers towards the viola from the beginning and Zimmerman, wishing to distinguish herself from three older musical siblings, began her string-playing life as a viola player at the age of three. Power's situation was, he admits, "a little unusual" and he was fortunate to benefit from teaching at the Junior Guildhall between the ages of 11 and 18, yet his example demonstrates that, with proper guidance, a viola player can thrive without playing the violin first.

It is not perhaps the repertoire, then, which is lacking, but rather the number of specialist teachers available to young viola players. "I thought for some time that starting on the viola was the best way to future success," says Zimmermann. "But I have also seen many examples of bad early viola teaching by violinists, so I'm not sure the solution is as simple as I thought 20 years ago."

Of course, there have been many violinists throughout the years who have made wonderful sometime viola players – David Oistrakh and Pinchas Zukerman to name two of the best – and Power does not believe a "pure" viola route is necessarily "a prerequisite for playing the viola well". Yet he does believe "it takes a very particular type of violinist" to find the best in the instrument. So until more emphasis is placed on training children specifically as viola players, the usual route to the instrument will remain a start on the violin and a shift later on for those students attracted to the viola's singular voice.

And it appears that attraction is growing. Not long ago Rysanov performed his arrangement of Saint-Saëns's First Cello Concerto in China and was amazed at the positive reaction from the overwhelmingly young audience. "It's not a landslide effect," he says, "but I do believe that nowadays there are more opportunities for serious players than ever before." "It's a really exciting time," echoes Power. "There are lots of wonderful players and certainly the standard is improving among college students. To be a professional viola player at a time when one's colleagues are also doing such interesting things is so rewarding." Slowly, but surely, the tide is turning.

Four major new viola recordings

B Mantovani Concerto for Two Violas. Time Stretch
Tabea Zimmermann, Antoine Tamestit *vas* **Liège Royal PO / Pascal Rophé**
Aeon Ⓕ AECD1102
A fine example of the artist/composer collaborative process. Mantovani wrote his "Double" Viola Concerto specially for Zimmermann and Tamestit.



Vaughan Williams Flos Campi. Suite for Viola and Small Orchestra
McEwen Viola Concerto
Lawrence Power *va*
BBC NOW / Martyn Brabbins
Hyperion Ⓕ CDA67839
Lawrence Power continues his longstanding relationship with Hyperion with this disc (to be issued in November) of British gems. Vaughan Williams's Suite, comprising eight short pieces, was composed for Lionel Tertis in 1934, while John McEwan's Viola Concerto was composed for Tertis in 1901.



Schubert Arpeggione Sonata, D821 (arr Tabakova)
Tchaikovsky Rococo Variations (arr Rysanov)
Bruch Romance, Op 85
Maxim Rysanov *va* **Swedish Chamber Orchestra / Muhai Tang**
BIS Ⓕ BIS-SACD1843
Maxim Rysanov's brand-new second disc for BIS features his arrangement of Tchaikovsky's *Rococo* Variations, adapted for his 2010 Proms performance. Rysanov's first BIS album featured his arrangements of Bach's Solo Cello Suites.



Berlioz Harold in Italy
Paganini Sonata per la gran viola e orchestra
David Aaron Carpenter *va* **Helsinki PO / Vladimir Ashkenazy**
Ondine Ⓕ ODE1188-2
Carpenter returns to disc with an unpublished, more virtuoso version of the Berlioz favourite, written for Paganini. He pairs this with a showpiece Paganini wrote after rejecting the Berlioz commission.

PHOTOGRAPHY: THOMAS HULL, CORBIS., SISI BURN/ARENAPAL HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES)

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Pick of the Season

Our essential guide to the highlights of the new season in opera houses and concert halls in the UK, Europe and North America

United Kingdom

BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA OF WALES

A French-themed concert kicks off the season with Steven Isserlis performing Saint-Saëns's Cello Concerto No 1 under Thomas Søndergård, who is to become principal conductor in September 2012. Stephen Hough and François Frédéric Guy feature in a series of three piano performances; in the third Angela Hewitt plays Mozart's Piano Concerto No 22.
+44 (0)29 2087 8444
www.bbc.co.uk/now

BBC PHILHARMONIC

Following a spectacular season-opening *Resurrection* Symphony, new chief conductor Juanjo Mena returns to his roots in a programme of music by Spanish composers; and John Storgårds, who becomes principal guest conductor in 2012, begins a journey through the symphonies of Sibelius with Nos 3 and 7.
+44 (0)161 907 9000
www.bbc.co.uk/philharmonic

BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

There are concerts in Aberdeen and Edinburgh as well as in Glasgow. The orchestra is joined by baritone Tommi Hakala, the London Symphony Chorus and the BBC Singers for the Scottish premiere of James MacMillan's *St John Passion*, led by chief conductor Donald Runnicles. Other highlights include all Prokofiev's piano concertos.
+44 (0)141 353 8000
www.bbc.co.uk/bbcsso

BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Chief conductor Jiří Bělohlávek presents an all-Czech evening including a new work by Jiří Kadeřábek, as well as a concert staging of Dvořák's *The Jacobin*. Finnish music is also featured, including a Sibelius cycle and UK premiere of Kaija Saariaho's *Leino Songs*.
+44 (0)844 243 0753
www.bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra

BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The survey of Beethoven's symphonies continues, as does the focus on Russian repertoire, including Rachmaninov's works for piano and orchestra. Less familiar offerings include Oliver Knussen's Violin Concerto and a piece by principal conductor Kirill Karabits's father Ivan (*d* 2002). Among music by British composers are Britten's *Les illuminations* and Walton's First Symphony. Soloists include Mark Padmore, John Lill, Stephen Hough and Alina Ibragimova.
+44 (0)1202 669925
www.bsolive.com

BRITTEN SINFONIA

An eclectic mix includes historically informed performances of Handel's *Messiah* as well as a journey from Schubert to Mahler through Webern's musical lens. Premieres include Tarik O'Regan's *Heart of Darkness* and a work by Piers Tattersall. UK venues are in Cambridge, Norwich, London and Brighton, and the orchestra makes its US debut in February 2012 at New York's Lincoln Center. Guests include Mark Elder, Simon Keenlyside and Thomas Adès.
+44 (0)1223 357851
www.brittensinfonia.com

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

In 2012 it'll be 50 years since the CBSO gave the premiere of Britten's *War Requiem* at Coventry Cathedral, and now they return to perform it again under their music director Andris Nelsons. Other highlights are the London 2012 Festival Opening Concert – the UK premiere of Jonathan Harvey's *Weltethos*; a celebration of Bollywood composer RD Burman; and UK premieres of works by Scandinavian composers Rolf Martinsson, Rolf Wallin and Poul Ruders.
+44 (0)121 780 3333
www.cbso.co.uk

ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA

Setting out to demonstrate opera's continuing relevance and accessibility today, ENO presents four operas by living composers: John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer*, Detlev Glanert's *Caligula*, Wolfgang Rihm's *Jakob Lenz* and, as part of the London 2012 Festival, Damon Albarn's *Doctor Dee*. Additional productions include the UK premiere of Weinberg's *The Passenger* directed by David Pountney, Rameau's *Castor and Pollux*, Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*, Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* and Britten's *Billy Budd*.
+44 (0)871 911 0200
www.eno.org

HALLÉ

In a Beethoven symphony cycle, five are conducted by music director Mark Elder and four fall to Markus Stenz, Lothar Koenigs, Edward Gardner and Nikolaj Znaider, who's also soloist in Bartók's Violin Concerto No 2. There's Mozart, Sibelius, Magnus Lindberg and John Barry. Alice Coote and Lars Cleveman perform *Das Lied von der Erde* to mark the centenary of Kathleen Ferrier's birth.
+44 (0)161 907 9000
www.halle.co.uk

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Principal conductor Vladimir Jurowski begins with a homage to Mussorgsky and an exploration of the Prometheus myth. Janine Jansen plays Tchaikovsky, Mozart and Prokofiev – the last as part of the festival "Sergei Prokofiev: Man of the People?", featuring both well-known and rarely performed gems for concert hall, stage and cinema. Plus a focus on Bruckner.
+44 (0)20 7840 4242
www.lpo.org.uk



HOW I'M PREPARING

KIRILL KARABITS

The Ukrainian conductor is directing the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in the UK premiere of Concerto for Orchestra No 2 by his father, Ivan Karabits (1945-2002)

"This is not a case of self-indulgence because my father wrote it: it represents repertoire that I am truly engaged with. It isn't an easy piece to prepare for in terms of its rich musical substance, but I persevere because it does what my father intended: it is fun, theatrical and accessible."

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LONDON SINFONIETTA

As part of Southbank Centre's celebration of Pierre Boulez, the London Sinfonietta presents a concert of his music inspired by electronic technologies at the IRCAM centre in Paris, featuring live electronics artists Sound Intermedia, conducted by Péter Eötvös. There's also a celebration of US composer Conlon Nancarrow.
+44 (0)844 847 9940
www.londonsinfonietta.org.uk

MANCHESTER CAMERATA

This season, named Portraits in Music, offers music from the 17th century to the present day. Two concerts feature works by new music director Gábor Takács-Nagy's fellow Hungarian Bartók, and there's an English celebration featuring Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Haydn. Pianist Kathryn Stott plays Mozart, with Dame Evelyn Glennie, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet and Rebecca Bottone.
+44 (0)161 907 9000
www.manchestercamerata.co.uk

NORTHERN SINFONIA

Highlights of Thomas Zehetmair's 10th season as music director include a Beethoven piano concerto cycle featuring soloists Jonathan Biss, Paul Lewis and Olli Mustonen; and the return of the acclaimed "Late Mix" series, with a focus on words and music, including works by Percy Grainger, Morton Feldman, Richard Ayres, Steve Reich, Harrison Birtwistle and Olivier Messiaen.
+44 (0)191 443 4661
www.thesagegateshead.org/sinfonia

OPERA NORTH

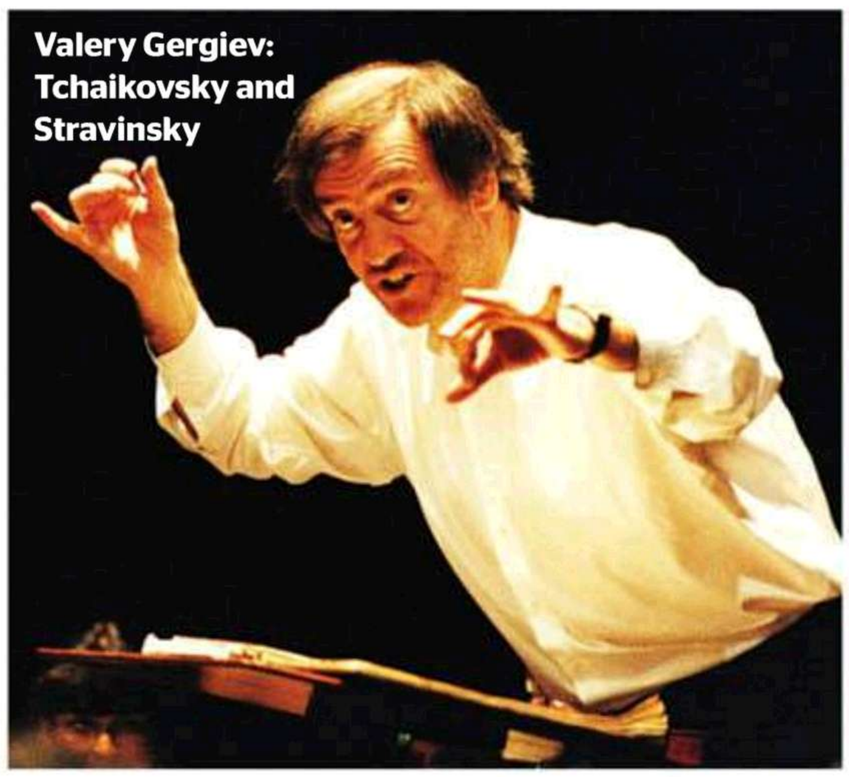
Past productions return this season: Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (Anne Sophie Duprels revives her 2007 role) and Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore* (with the same cast as in 2009/10). Plus there are new productions of epic stories: *Giulio Cesare* by Handel, Bellini's *Norma* (directed by Christopher Alden), Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* (sung in English, with Josephine Barstow) and Wagner's *Die Walküre* (in a concert staging).
+44 (0)844 848 2722
www.operanorth.co.uk

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

Principal conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen opens the season with Sibelius's epic *Kullervo*, concludes his Bartók retrospective, and gives the opening and closing concerts of The Still Point of the Turning World: Music That Defines an Era, with Dallapiccola's opera *Il prigioniero* and Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony. Lorin Maazel concludes his Mahler symphony cycle, and a weekend is dedicated to Delius's 150th birthday.
+44 (0)800 652 6717
www.philharmonia.co.uk

ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The series Made in Britain continues, including a new Bassoon Concerto by Gary Carpenter and an evening of British film music. Also, there's a chance to hear a host of film music by John Williams in an 80th birthday concert. A new series focusing on ninth symphonies includes works by Vaughan Williams, Schubert, Mahler, Bruckner, Shostakovich, Dvořák and Glazunov; and, in honour of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, Beethoven's Ninth is performed in a double bill with a new No 9 by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies.
+44 (0)151 709 3789
www.liverpoolphil.com



Valery Gergiev: Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

The Royal Opera extends its season into late July with 18 productions including the UK premiere of *Miss Fortune* by Judith Weir, conducted by Paul Daniel. For the first time since 1965 there's a complete production by Richard Jones of all of Puccini's *Il trittico*, conducted by music director Antonio Pappano with a cast including Eva-Maria Westbroek. There's also Verdi, Wagner, Bellini, Dvořák, Donizetti, Strauss and Berlioz, and a Plácido Domingo celebration.
+44 (0)20 7304 4000
www.roh.org.uk

ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Music director Stéphane Denève's final season is primarily a colourful celebration of the Auld Alliance between France and Scotland. There is a host of French and Scottish conductors and soloists, as well as music by Scottish and French composers, and music inspired by the two countries. And, fittingly, it's the year of Claude Debussy's 150th birthday, so there are performances of all his major orchestral works. The season's soloists include Nicola Benedetti, Steven Osborne, Hilary Hahn and Gerald Finley.
+44 (0)141 353 8000
www.rsno.org.uk

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Principal conductor Robin Ticciati valiantly starts with Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, usually associated with symphony orchestra forces. Featured composers include Berlioz (paired with Schumann) and Beethoven. There are world premieres by Martin Suckling, Gordon Kerry (Flute Concerto), Haflidi Hallgrímsson (Jennifer Pike plays his Violin Concerto), Sally Beamish (Percussion Concerto) and Oliver Knussen. And David Watkin conducts Haydn's *Le matin*, *Le midi* and *Le soir* all in one evening.
+44 (0)131 557 6800
www.sco.org.uk

SCOTTISH OPERA

The company's adventurous repertoire includes a revival of Thomas Allen's production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, plus new productions: Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*; David McVicar's first production of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*; Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins* in a co-production with Company Chordelia; and Mark Anthony Turnage's *Greek*, with Music Theatre Wales and the Traverse Theatre.
+44 (0)844 871 7647
www.scottishopera.org.uk

ULSTER ORCHESTRA

Eddi Reader features in a celebration of Burns Night, and there's Brian Kennedy's Swing Christmas and the James Galway Prom. Next year marks 100 years since the *Titanic*'s sinking, and a commemorative concert includes the premiere of a new work by associate composer Ian Wilson. Plus new principal conductor JoAnn Falletta presents an American evening with pianist Joanna MacGregor; guitarist Craig Ogden plays Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*; and percussionist Colin Currie plays James MacMillan.
+44 (0)28 9023 9955
www.ulsterorchestra.com

WELSH NATIONAL OPERA

Six revivals are framed by two new productions: Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, conducted by music director Lothar Koenigs opens the season, starring Welsh baritone David Kempster; and Puccini's *La bohème* comes last, in an early-20th-century-set production by Annabel Arden. The other operas on offer are *The Barber of Seville*, *Katya Kabanova*, *La traviata*, *Beatrice and Benedict*, *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Tristan and Isolde*.
+44 (0)29 2063 6464
www.wno.org.uk

FOCUS ON....

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Principal conductor Valery Gergiev completes his Tchaikovsky symphony cycle and starts a new Stravinsky festival. Nielsen's symphonies continue with Sir Colin Davis, who also teams up with Mitsuko Uchida for Beethoven's piano concertos. Anne-Sophie Mutter is the featured artist and Thomas Adès conducts his own works.
+44 (0)20 7638 8891
www.lso.co.uk

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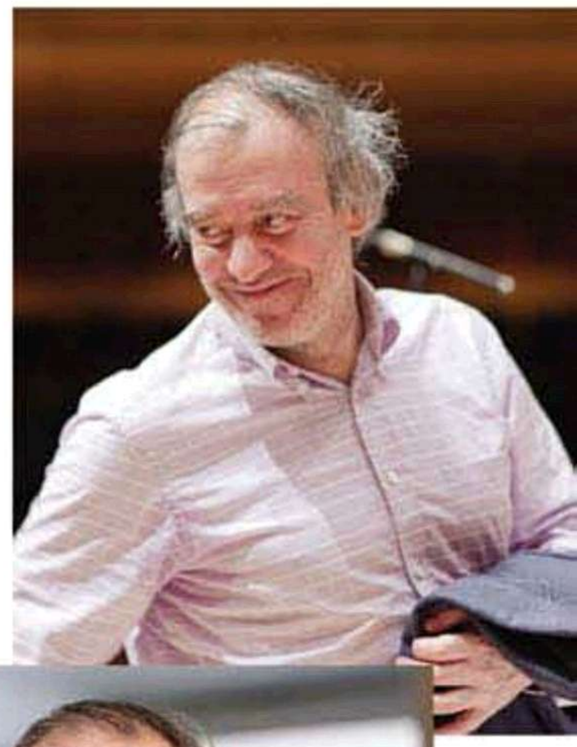
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London Symphony Orchestra
Living Music

London Symphony Orchestra Season 2011/12 Gergiev's Russian Greats

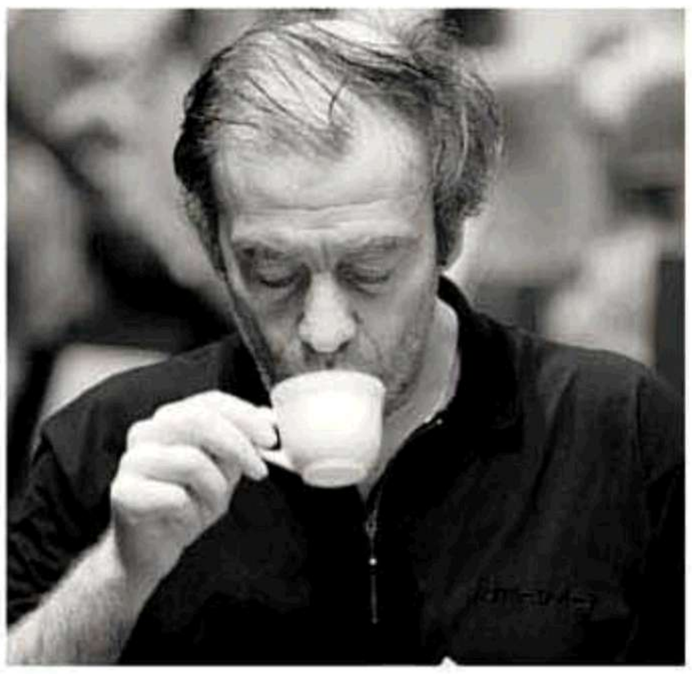
'This is clearly a cycle not to be missed.'
The Guardian Jan 2011, on Gergiev's Tchaikovsky











Gergiev's Russian Greats
Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Gubaidulina, Stravinsky

September 2011

XIV International Tchaikovsky Competition Winners' Gala

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 4

November 2011

Prokofiev Symphony No 1 ('Classical')

Shostakovich Symphony No 6

Shostakovich Symphony No 10

Sofia Gubaidulina Fachwerk

Sofia Gubaidulina In tempus praesens

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 5

Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto

February 2012

Prokofiev Piano Concerto No 3

Shostakovich Symphony No 5

Shostakovich Violin Concerto No 1

Tchaikovsky Overture: Romeo and Juliet

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 6 ('Pathétique')

May 2012

Stravinsky The Firebird – complete ballet

Stravinsky Mass

Stravinsky Oedipus Rex

Stravinsky Renard

Stravinsky The Rite of Spring

Stravinsky The Soldier's Tale

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ACCADEMIA NAZIONALE DI SANTA CECILIA, ROME

Among the highlights are Mahler's huge Symphony No 8, Mozart's Requiem, Dvořák's *New World* Symphony, Bruckner's Symphony No 8, Poulenc's *Gloria* and the *Faust-Symphonie* by Liszt – all led by principal conductor Antonio Pappano. Featured soloists include Evgeny Kissin, Leonidas Kavakos and Lisa Batiashvili, and Stefano Bollani plays the Ravel Piano Concerto. Thomas Adès conducts his own music in a "tempest"-themed programme, and Donald Runnicles's Wagner Gala features soprano Katarina Dalayman.

+39 02 600 60 900
www.santacecilia.it

BAVARIAN RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Mahler, Beethoven, Brahms and Janáček feature strongly this time around. The Mahler symphony cycle comes to a close, with Nos 8 and 9 conducted by Mariss Jansons, and Daniele Gatti conducts the *Adagio* from the unfinished 10th; *Das Lied von der Erde* is led by Riccardo Chailly. Chief conductor Jansons continues his series coupling each of Beethoven's symphonies with specially commissioned new works.

+49 89 5900 4545
www.br-online.de

BAVARIAN STATE OPERA

New productions include Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Puccini's *Turandot*, and Wagner's *Ring*, conducted by Kent Nagano. You can also catch tried-and-trusted versions of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, Berg's *Wozzeck*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, two operas by Donizetti, five by Mozart, three by Puccini, two by Rossini, five by Verdi and two more by Wagner.

+49 89 2185 1920
www.bayerische.staatsoper.de

BERGEN PHILHARMONIC

Lawrence Power is artist-in-residence and performs viola concertos by Walton, Rózsa and Schnittke. A Gershwin evening is conducted by music director Andrew Litton, and mezzo Angelika Kirchschlager features in a programme of Gustav and Alma Mahler. Kent Nagano leads a concert performance of Wagner's *Siegfried*, and there's also a performance of Chabrier's comic opera *L'étoile*.

+47 815 33 133
www.harmonien.no

BERLIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

This year focuses on the 1890s, including Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*, Mahler's *Resurrection* (as part of the complete cycle), Bruckner's Ninth and Dvořák's *New World* symphonies, alongside works by Bruch, Wolf, Reger and Klughardt. There is also late-night Berio, and the Singers series showcases Gerald Finley, Magdalena Kožená, Jonas Kaufmann and Joyce DiDonato; the chamber music programme includes the Cuarteto Casals and Fine Arts Quartet.

+ 49 30 254 88 999
www.berliner-philharmoniker.de

BUDAPEST FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

Music director Iván Fischer's selection ensures that a broad variety of works are available to Budapest audiences. Composers performed in the new season range from Bach, Haydn and Mozart via Mahler, Brahms and Tchaikovsky, through to Bartók, Enescu and Liadov. On hand are guest conductors David Zinman and Marek Janowski, while guest artists Truls Mørk, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet and Pinchas Zuckerman add star power to the proceedings.

+36 1 312 0000
www.bfz.hu

CZECH PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The orchestra's 115th season showcases symphonies by Beethoven, Dvořák, Berlioz, Mahler, Brahms, Haydn, Sibelius, Tchaikovsky, Aho, Bernstein and Shostakovich, plus concertos by Britten, Schumann, Mozart and Martinů, not to mention an array of chamber concerts. Conductors include Herbert Blomstedt, Manfred Honeck, Sir Colin Davis and Osmo Vänskä.

+420 227 059 227
www.ceskafilharmonie.cz

DE NEDERLANDSE OPERA

Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* opens the season at Het Musiektheater Amsterdam, conducted by Marc Minkowski and starring Véronique Gens and Anne Sofie von Otter. Three other Greek-inspired operas feature: Trojahn's 1949 *Orest* and Richard Strauss's *Elektra*, each conducted by Marc Albrecht, and Handel's *Deidamia* conducted by Ivor Bolton. New productions include Rossini's *Il Turco in Italia* under Carlo Rizzi, Wagner's *Parsifal* conducted by Iván Fischer, Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya* and Mozart's *Idomeneo*.

+31 20 551 8117
www.dno.nl

DEUTSCHE OPER BERLIN

Amongst the company's variety of revivals are seven premiere productions, including Verdi's *Don Carlo*, Janáček's *Jenufa* and Wagner's *Lohengrin*, each conducted by Deutsche Oper music director Donald Runnicles; a concert version of Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* starring Patrizia Ciofi; Rossini's *Tancredi* conducted by Alberto Zedda; and concert versions of Verdi's *I Due Foscari* and *Il trovatore*. Runnicles also conducts Bernstein's *Candide* with Toby Spence and Simone Kermes.

+49 30 343 84 343
www.deutscheoperberlin.de

SEMPEROPER DRESDEN

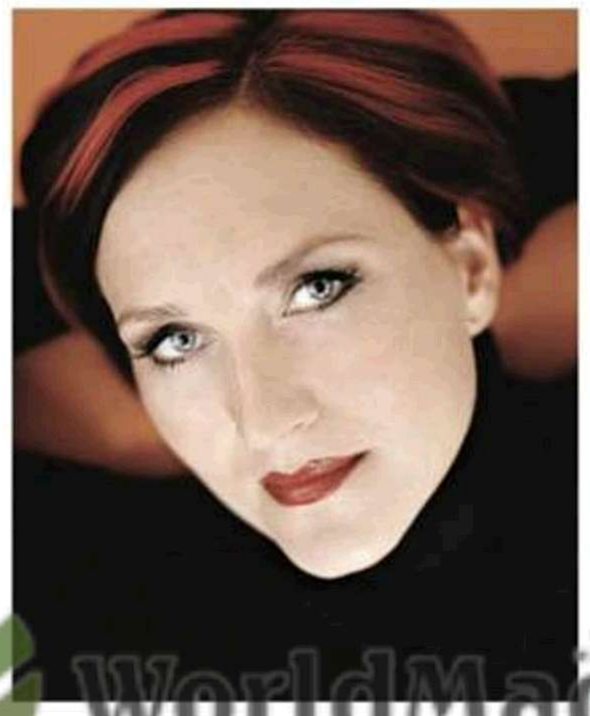
Premiere productions for the season include Strauss's *Daphne*, Hasse's *Il tutore*, Dvořák's *Rusalka*, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Cui's fairytale opera *Puss in Boots*, Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, and Kurt Weil's *Street Scene*. Plus there are concert performances of Rossini's *The Thieving Magpie*, and Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* conducted by Vladimir Jurowski.

+49 351 49 11 705
www.semperoper.de

STAATSKAPELLE DRESDEN

Although Christian Thielemann won't take up the reins as music director until next season, his guidance is keenly felt as chief conductor of the orchestra's international tours, and in performances of Lehár highlights with Anna Netrebko, Liszt's *Faust* Symphony and Brahms's First Symphony. There are also star appearances from conductors Sir Colin Davis, Herbert Blomstedt and Georges Prêtre, and soloists Nikolaj Znaider, Martha Argerich, Anna Netrebko, Janine Jansen, Julia Fischer and Truls Mørk.

+49 351 49 11 705
www.staatskapelle-dresden.de



HOW I'M PREPARING

SIMONE KERMES

The German soprano on her first Cunegonde in Bernstein's Candide, for the Deutsche Oper, Berlin

"Stylistically, *Candide* sits between musicals and opera, but it is technically very difficult. One thing I did that was good preparation was a world music concert with a Tunisian musician, with Arabian music and improvisation. It was a new experience that moved me away from opera. Once I've learnt the score very well, I then have to let the interpretation emerge from within."

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The Tallis Scholars
Magnificat
Wednesday 19 October 2011, 7.30pm

The Wellensian Consort
'Choir of the Year 2010'
Blessed Cecilia
Thursday 24 November 2011, 7.30pm

The Armonico Consort
A German Christmas Story
Wednesday 7 December 2011, 7.30pm

The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge
What Sweeter Music?
Friday 9 December 2011, 7.30pm

The Eric Whitacre Singers
Inspirations
Wednesday 1 February 2012, 7.30pm

New York Polyphony
Tudor City
Wednesday 21 March 2012, 7.30pm

Ex Cathedra
Bach: A Beautiful Mind
Thursday 19 April 2012, 7.30pm

The Tallis Scholars
Field of the Cloth of Gold
Wednesday 16 May 2012, 7.30pm

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Mariss Jansons and the Royal Concertgebouw

FOCUS ON....

ROYAL CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA, AMSTERDAM

Another outstanding season from the Dutch orchestra: music director Mariss Jansons conducts Mozart's Requiem; Lang Lang performs Bartók's Second Piano Concerto; Sol Gabetta performs Barber's Cello Concerto; Bernard Haitink conducts Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie*; violinist Janine Jansen performs Mendelssohn; and Nikolaus Harnoncourt conducts Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*.
+31 20 5730573 / www.concertgebouworkest.nl

GEWANDHAUS ORCHESTRA, LEIPZIG

Music director Riccardo Chailly opens with Mendelssohn's Fifth Symphony, and later conducts the symphonies of Bruckner, Beethoven and Mahler. Other conducting highlights include Kurt Masur on the podium for Matthias Goerne in Schubert Lieder; Herbert Blomstedt in Berg's Violin Concerto with Leonidas Kavakos alongside Bruckner's Ninth; Andris Nelsons in Sibelius's Second Symphony; Christian Thielemann in Bruckner's Fifth; Osmo Vänskä in Nielsen's Fifth; and Jakub Hrůša conducting Steven Isserlis in Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto.
+49 341 12 70 28
www.gewandhaus.de

LUXEMBOURG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

There's a huge variety of symphonic works, plus family and chamber concerts. Highlights include Beethoven's *Triple* and *Emperor* Concertos, Bruckner's Fourth Symphony, Schumann's Cello Concerto and Fauré's Requiem.
+352 26 32 26 32
www.opl.lu

MARIINSKY THEATRE, ST PETERSBURG

Opening the season is a new production of Verdi's *Aida*, conducted by Andrei Petrenko and starring Anna Makarova. This is followed by Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* conducted by music director Valery Gergiev. Also staged are Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*, Puccini's *Tosca*, Borodin's *Prince Igor*, Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko* and Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*. There are concert performances of Tchaikovsky and Brahms, Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto and the Requiems of Mozart and Verdi.
+7 812 326 4141
www.mariinsky.ru

MUNICH PHILHARMONIC

Valery Gergiev's busy schedule also takes him to Munich to conduct Shostakovich's 15 symphonies. Nine of them are performed by the Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre and the Munich Philharmonic take the other six. There's also the continuation of Munich's Mahler cycle with a performance to mark the 100th anniversary of the world premiere of *Das Lied von der Erde*.
+89 480 98 5500
www.mphil.de

OPERA ALLA SCALA, MILAN

Italy's premier opera house showcases 13 operas, six ballets, concerts and recitals. Opera highlights include Mozart's *Don Giovanni* conducted by Daniel Barenboim with Anna Netrebko and Bryn Terfel; Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* conducted by Semyon Bychkov; Britten's *Peter Grimes* starring John Mark Ainsley; Verdi's *Luisa Miller* under Gianandrea Noseda; Massenet's *Manon* with Nathalie Dessay under Fabio Luisi; Wagner's *Siegfried* with Lance Ryan and Nina Stemme; and Verdi's *Rigoletto* conducted by Gustavo Dudamel.
+39 02 860 775
www.teatroallascala.org

OPÉRA NATIONAL DE PARIS

The new season at Opéra Bastille and the Palais Garnier takes in a range of popular and lesser-known productions: from Strauss's *Salome*, Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, to Philippe Fénelon's *La Cerisaie*, a 12-scene opera completed in 2010 with a libretto by Alexei Parine. Also on the agenda are symphonic concerts featuring violinist Renaud Capuçon and the Paris Opera Orchestra under conductor Philippe Jordan.
+33 8 92 89 90 90
www.operadeparis.fr

ROTTERDAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Principal conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducts Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. Also on hand are violinist Vadim Repin in Prokofiev, Sir Mark Elder in Beethoven and Shostakovich, Jaap van Zweden conducting Mahler's Fifth and Sir Andrew Davis in Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.
+31 10 217 1717
www.rpho.nl

RTÉ NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, DUBLIN

The season of 70 concerts includes Beethoven and Mozart piano concerto cycles with associate artist Finghin Collins, a Soloist Directs series, a Prokofiev symphony cycle with principal conductor Alan Buribayev, The French Connection featuring Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and Debussy's *Jeux*.
+353 1 417 0000
www.rte.ie

RUSSIAN NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

The season begins with a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, both arranged and conducted by RNO founder and music director Mikhail Pletnev. He also conducts Grieg's *Peer Gynt*, Bruckner's Ninth, Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* and Brahms's Violin Concerto with Viktoria Mullova.
+7 495 504 0781 83
www.russianarts.org

ST PETERSBURG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Artistic director Yuri Temirkanov has programmed a wealth of Russian music, including Shostakovich's Symphonies Nos 7, 8 and 9, and works by Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov. There's also Mozart and Music of Vienna; Passions to Romanticism, including works by Mendelssohn, Brahms and Saint-Saëns; and Concerts with Plots.
+7 812 710-42-57
www.philharmonia.spb.ru/eng

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC

First-rate guest conductors work with the celebrated orchestra: Christoph Eschenbach in Mahler and Beethoven; Gustavo Dudamel in Strauss and Mendelssohn; Valery Gergiev in an all-Russian programme; Zubin Mehta in Dvořák and Strauss; Antonio Pappano in Haydn and Brahms; and Daniel Barenboim in Mozart and Ibert. The much-anticipated New Year's Concert is under the baton of Mariss Jansons.
+43 1 505 65 25
www.wienerphilharmoniker.at

TEATRO REAL, MADRID

Semyon Bychkov opens the new season, conducting Strauss's *Elektra* starring Jane Henschel and Rosalind Plowright. Also staged are Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*; Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk;* a double bill of Shostakovich's *Iolanta* and Stravinsky's *Perséphone*; Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*; Mercadante's *I due Figaro* conducted by Riccardo Muti; Robert Wilson's *The Life and Death of Marina Abramovic*; and Golijov's *Ainadamar* directed by Peter Sellars.
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BALTIMORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Marin Alsop marks her fifth full season as Baltimore music director with a year-long celebration of revolutionary women. Pivotal to the festivities is the 600th anniversary of the birth of Joan of Arc in January 2012: on the bill are Honegger's 1935 *Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher* and Richard Einhorn's *Voices of Light*, composed as an accompaniment to 1928 silent film *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. In November 2011 the orchestra performs at New York's Carnegie Hall and in March 2012 embarks on its first domestic tour since 2000. A commitment to living composers includes a commission from David T Little and James Lee III, and works by Philip Glass, Jennifer Higdon, James MacMillan and Joan Tower.
+1 410 783 8000
www.bsomusic.org

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter opens the new season, appearing as soloist and conductor in Mozart's five violin concertos over two days. Also on hand are an array of first-rate guest conductors: Bernard Haitink for Beethoven's First, Sixth and Ninth Symphonies; Christoph von Dohnányi for Brahms's *German* Requiem; Kurt Masur for Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*; Charles Dutoit for Debussy's *La Mer*; Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos for Schumann, Strauss, Haydn and Wagner; and Symphony Hall debuts from Jiří Bělohlávek, Riccardo Chailly and Andris Nelsons. New music features, too, with the completion of a two-year cycle of John Harbison symphonies.
+1 888 266 1200
www.bso.org

CHICAGO SYMPHONY

This season takes as its focus An Exuberant Era: 1911-12, marking the centenary of Mahler's death and including works of the time. Music director Riccardo Muti conducts 10 weeks of concerts and six weeks of international and West Coast tours. Other conductors include Pierre Boulez, former principal conductor Bernard Haitink, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Michael Tilson Thomas, while Emmanuel Ax curates three-week piano festival, Keys to the City. In addition there are three world premieres of commissioned works by Anna Clyne, Mason Bates and Christopher Martin.
+1 312 294 3000
www.cso.org

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO

The season features 72 performances of eight different operas, including three new productions: Jerome Kern's *Show Boat* starring Nathan Gunn and directed by Francesca Zambello; Handel's *Rinaldo* starring David Daniels and conducted by Harry Bicket; and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* starring Susanna Philips and staged by Catherine Malfitano. The remaining productions are Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Deborah Voigt, Mozart's *The Magic Flute* starring Nicole Cabell and Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* starring Ferruccio Furlanetto, each conducted by music director Andrew Davis, plus Verdi's *Aida* under Renato Palumbo and Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* conducted by Emmanuel Villaume.
+1 312 332 2244
www.lyricopera.org

CINCINNATI SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

This season the orchestra scores a coup, with three top-ranking creative directors for its three subscription series: Lang Lang heads the five-concert Ascent series and performs as soloist in two programmes; Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos leads the 10-concert Masterwork series and conducts two performances; and Philip Glass directs the five-concert Boundless series, including the world premiere of his Second Cello Concerto. Other highlights include Itzhak Perlman's opening night appearance as soloist and conductor, and a two-week Russian festival.
+1 513 744 3599
cincinnatisymphony.org

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

Franz Welser-Möst's 10th season as music director includes concert performances of Strauss's *Salome* starring Nina Stemme, and a three-week Brahms festival featuring Piano Concertos Nos 1 and 2 performed by Yefim Bronfman, and the Violin Concerto performed by Lisa Batiashvili. In addition Pierre Boulez, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Mitsuko Uchida and artist-in-residence Ton Koopman return to Cleveland.
+1 216 231 1111
www.clevelandorchestra.com

DALLAS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The orchestra's 111th season begins under the baton of music director Jaap van Zweden, conducting Prokofiev's Symphony No 5 and Brahms's Piano Concerto No 1 with soloist Emanuel Ax, and finishes with a concert version of Beethoven's *Fidelio*. In between, the packed schedule includes an eight-day Mendelssohn festival featuring all five symphonies; four DSO premieres by John Luther Adams, Philip Glass, Christopher Rouse and Kaija Saariaho; Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Berlioz's *Te Deum*; and appearances from Marin Alsop, Joshua Bell, Richard Croft and Sir James Galway.
+1 214 692 0203
www.dallassymphony.com

DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Detroit Symphony music director Leonard Slatkin aims to provide a balance between core repertoire, and new and little-known works this season. In the latter category are the American premiere of Michel Camilo's Piano Concerto No 2 and the world premiere of *Kraken* by Du Yun; in the former are Handel's *Messiah* conducted by Christopher Warren-Green and Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* featuring Nicola Benedetti.



HOW I'M PREPARING
MARIN ALSOP

Alsop conducts the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in a yearlong celebration of revolutionary women

"I'm intrigued by the often contrary symbolic roles that Joan of Arc has taken on in our contemporary world. Honegger's *Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher* and Richard Einhorn's *Voices of Light* share elements of the absurd while representing two very distinct takes. I'm currently reading biographies and culling through the massive scholarship on her life."

Further highlights include a flute celebration with Sir James Galway, Marina Piccinini and Hai-Xin Wu; and a Hollywood Pictures programme.
+1 313 576 5111
www.dso.org

LOS ANGELES OPERA

LA Opera presents six productions this season. Company premiere *Simon Boccanegra* stars general director Plácido Domingo in the title role under the baton of music director James Conlon. Also conducted by Conlon are Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* starring Dalibor Jenis, Mozart's *Così fan tutte* in a production by Nicholas Hytner and Britten's *Albert Herring* featuring tenor Alek Shrader. Meanwhile, Domingo steps onto the podium to conduct Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, and Patrick Summers makes his company debut conducting Puccini's *La bohème*.
+1 213 972 8001
www.laopera.com

LA PHILHARMONIC

Gustavo Dudamel's third season as music director has at its heart an ambitious plan to perform Mahler's nine complete symphonies with the LA Phil and Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela in both the US and Caracas. There is also the launch of a three-year project dedicated to Mozart's Da Ponte operas, each designed in

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Magnus Lindberg: composer-in-residence

collaboration with a leading architect; this year Frank Gehry designs *Don Giovanni*. Leading the field of no fewer than seven world premieres are John's Adams's oratorio, *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, and Shostakovich's lost opera, *Orango*, orchestrated by Gerard McBurney and staged by Peter Sellars. Plus Sir Simon Rattle returns to Walt Disney Concert Hall for the first time since 2000 to conduct Wagner and Bruckner.
+1 323 850 2000
www.laphil.com

METROPOLITAN OPERA, NEW YORK

The big news at the Met this season is the company's first new and complete *Ring* cycle in 20 years, following premieres of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* last season. Designed by Robert Lepage and conducted by James Levine, the four operas star Bryn Terfel as Wotan, Deborah Voigt as Brünnhilde, Jonas Kaufmann as Siegmund, Eva-Maria Westbroek as Sieglinde and Gary Lehman as Siegfried. The Met also presents new productions of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* and Massenet's *Manon* starring Anna Netrebko; Mozart's *Don Giovanni* starring Gerald Finley and Barbara Frittoli; Gounod's *Faust* with Jonas Kaufmann in the title role and René Pape as the devil; and the world premiere of *The Enchanted Island*, a work inspired by 18th century masques featuring Plácido Domingo, Joyce DiDonato and Danielle de Niese under William Christie.
+1 212 362 6000
www.metoperafamily.org

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Osmo Vänskä's ninth season as music director – and the final season before Minnesota's Orchestral Hall receives its $45m renovation – includes a two-week Bravo Brahms series, and performances of Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*. There are also appearances by soloists Midori, Stephen Hough, Peter Serkin and Deborah Voigt; a five-city Florida tour; and the launch of the Common Chords outreach project including weeklong festivals in Grand Rapids and Willmar.
+1 612 371 5656
www.minnesotaorchestra.org

PHOTOGRAPHY: HANYA CHLALA/ARENAPAL/BOOSEY & HAWKES

FOCUS ON....

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Music director Alan Gilbert collaborates with conductor David Zinman on The Modern Beethoven and extends Magnus Lindberg's tenure as composer-in-residence. Highlights include symphonies of Mahler, Brahms, Dvořák, Nielsen, Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky; world premieres by John Corigliano, Marc Neikrug and Magnus Lindberg; and Philip Glass's Philharmonic debut in his 75th birthday year with his *Koyaanisqatsi*.
+1 212 875 5656
nyphil.org

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The season opens with an 80th birthday celebration for the Washington-based orchestra featuring music director Christoph Eschenbach, violinist Joshua Bell and baritone Thomas Hampson in works by Dvořák, Bruch, Copland and Ravel. Later there will be appearances from Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos conducting Orff's *Carmina Burana*; Gidon Kremer in Sibelius's Violin Concerto; Oliver Knussen conducting the NSO premiere of Messiaen's *Le Réveil des oiseaux*; Gautier Capuçon in Saint-Saëns's First Cello Concerto; Ingrid Fliter in Schumann's Piano Concerto; Stephen Hough in Rachmaninov's First Piano Concerto, and Eschenbach conducting Beethoven's *Fidelio*.
+1 202 467 4600
www.kennedy-center.org/nso

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

Billed as the People's Opera, New York's second opera company delivers more accessible productions this season. On the agenda are works ranging from the Baroque to contemporary, including Verdi's *La traviata* in a new staging by Jonathan Miller; the New York premiere of Rufus Wainwright's *Prima Donna*; Mozart's *Così fan tutte*; and Telemann's *Orpheus* starring baritone Daniel Teadt.
+1 212 870 5570
www.nycopera.com

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

Charles Dutoit conducts eight weeks of concerts in his final season as chief conductor, including an opening night gala with soprano Dawn Upshaw, a concert performance of Strauss's *Elektra* with soprano Eva Johansson and a collaboration with pianist Maurizio Pollini. Meanwhile, music director designate Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducts Brahms's *German* Requiem with baritone Matthias Goerne, and leads Bach's Fifth *Brandenburg* Concerto from the keyboard. Beethoven is given special focus, featuring Dutoit, Lang Lang, Herbert Blomstedt, Leif Ove Andsnes, Christoph Eschenbach and David Zinman.
+1 215 893 1999
www.philorch.org

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Nine operas are showcased, including the world premiere of Christopher Theofanidis's *Heart of a Soldier*, commissioned for the 10th anniversary of September 11, and starring Thomas Hampson. There are also company premieres *Lucrezia Borgia* starring Renée Fleming, *Xerxes* and *Nixon in China*; new productions of *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute* starring Nathan Gunn; a new co-production of *Attila* with Teatro alla Scala; and *Turandot* and *Carmen* revivals. Plus there are showcases for the San Francisco Opera Orchestra conducted by music director Nicola Luisotti.
+1 415 864 3330
www.sfopera.com

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

The Symphony marks its centenary this season in celebratory style. Music director Michael Tilson Thomas welcomes the return of American Mavericks in 2012, after its launch in 2000, with three concerts of "venturesome" music featuring Emanuel Ax and Jessye Norman. Also invited to the San Francisco stage are six great American orchestras – from Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York and Philadelphia – each led by their respective principal conductors. Contemporary compositions are central to programming with commissions from Thomas Adès, Sofia Gubaidulina and Mason Bates. Plus, a week of semi-staged concerts commemorates music from the days of the Gold Rush.
+1 415 864 6000
www.sfsymphony.org

ST LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Music director David Robertson focuses on the relationship between dance and music and the opening weekend features three great Stravinsky ballet scores: *Petrushka*, *Les Noces* and *The Rite of Spring*. Also performed throughout the year are Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, and excerpts from Schumann's *Carnaval*. Stephen Hough performs three Rachmaninov piano concertos; there's Bach's B Minor Mass with the St Louis Symphony Chorus; and world premieres by Edgar Meyer and Steven Mackey; plus a United States premiere by Philippe Manoury.
+1 314 534 1700
www.stlsymphony.org

WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

There are five productions on the bill this season: Puccini's *Tosca* starring Patricia Racette and conducted by general director Plácido Domingo; Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Sarah Coburn and Lyubov Petrova in the title role; Mozart's *Così fan tutte* conducted by Philippe Auguin in a production by Jonathan Miller; Verdi's *Nabucco* starring Franco Vassallo; and Massenet's *Werther* conducted by Emmanuel Villaume. In addition two Celebrity Series concerts feature Angela Gheorghiu making her WNO debut and Deborah Voigt singing classics from the American songbook.
+1 202 467 4600
www.kennedy-center.org/wno

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Dvořák's voice emerges

Dvořák's Fifth is the first wholly personal masterwork in his symphonic canon. Suffused, too, with his love of country, it calls for an especially inspired response from its interpreters. **Andrew Achenbach** separates the great performances on disc from the merely good

Antonín Dvořák was staggeringly productive in 1875: in addition to the E major String Serenade, Moravian Duets, Nocturne in B major, *Vanda* (a grand opera in five acts) and three major chamber offerings (the First Piano Trio, String Quintet in G major and First Piano Quartet), he completed the fifth of his nine symphonies between June 15 and July 23. A dozen years later, he made minor revisions to the score before its publication in 1888. However, in a cynical ploy to boost sales, Fritz Simrock, who had already printed the composer's towering D major and D minor symphonies in 1882 and 1885, renumbered the symphony to give the impression that it was a brand new work, even assigning it a higher, entirely bogus opus number – much to Dvořák's dismay. The composer always thought of it as his Op 24, but Op 76 has become common currency.

Dedicated to the legendary conductor-pianist Hans von Bülow (who pronounced its creator "next to Brahms the most gifted composer of today") and luminously orchestrated, the deeply lovable Fifth is without doubt the first wholly personal masterwork in Dvořák's symphonic canon and miraculously distils the very essence of his Czech homeland. It is a work overflowing with life-enhancing inspiration, not least the artlessly serene tune heard at the outset (in Donald Tovey's estimation "the lightest symphonic opening since Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony"), while the adorably bucolic *Scherzo* also serves as a happy reminder that the first set of *Slavonic Dances* was a mere three years away. At the same time, there's muscle and gritty argument aplenty in the finale. This is as ambitious and original a structure as Dvořák ever devised, harmonically adventurous (it begins in A minor, the symphony's home key of F major only asserting itself after some 55 bars, before modulating into a remote D flat major for the ineffably tender second subject) and plotted with such unerring instinct that the eventual return in the closing pages of the pentatonic-flavoured material from the first movement has an overwhelming rightness about it.

Where better to begin than with one of the most beloved documents in the entire Dvořák discography, namely **Karel Šejna**'s famous Supraphon account from January 1952. It's the earliest of four recordings with the Czech Philharmonic in our survey and radiates a freshness of new discovery and sheer joy in music-making unrivalled in any version since. Indeed, the first movement's exposition unfolds with such sublime naturalness and wonder that one can only regret Šejna's decision to forgo the repeat. Not least of this distinguished performance's many felicities is the uniquely characterful, old-world timbre of the Czech PO, above all its irresistibly earthy winds. Just listen to those woody clarinets at the very start; then try the central *Un pochettino più mosso* of the slow movement and the enchanting Trio section, the latter a veritable woodland walk with the sounds of nature ringing in our ears. Šejna is also especially appreciative of the score's middle voices, nowhere more so than in the slow movement, where Dvořák's viola-writing glows with affecting intimacy. Similarly, the *Scherzo* (which follows after rather too long a gap) has a skip, flexibility and home-spun familiarity that are beyond compare. Few conductors steer a surer or more thrillingly assertive course through the remarkable finale, though Šejna allows himself plenty of leeway to savour the more lyrical moments: the soaring second subject really does seem to unfold with all the time in the world, and the same is true of that gorgeous A flat major episode at fig F or 4'38". Granted, in the coda you can't hear the trombone cutting through the texture with the symphony's opening motif, but, that apart, the performance is bliss from start to finish. The recording still sounds perfectly acceptable, just a tad crunchy in *tuttis* but commendably full-bodied and atmospheric for its vintage.

Compared with Šejna, **Václav Neumann** can seem a tad strait-laced. Certainly, in the first two movements at least, there's nothing to disturb the balmy summer mood. For all his agreeable thoughtfulness and meticulous preparation, Neumann's comparatively low-key approach lacks something in temperament. Yes, the silk-spun refinement of the orchestral playing is undeniably enticing, as (once again) the Czech PO's marvellously tangy winds steal the show. Fortunately, tension levels rise a couple of notches for the *Scherzo*, which is splendidly buoyant, while the finale has both purpose

PHOTOGRAPHY: ARENAPAL/TIMOTHY NEIL

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Antonín Dvořák: 'next to Brahms the most gifted composer of today', according to Hans von Bülow, dedicatee of the Fifth Symphony

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and a certain unruffled majesty. In the last resort, though, Neumann's isn't really a conception to set the imagination ablaze. In the Trio's first repeat, what I presume to be an editing glitch deprives us of the flute's final A flat quaver second time around (3'29"); otherwise, the early digital sound is pleasingly realistic, if a little unflattering to the strings. A co-production between Supraphon and Denon, this Fifth was initially housed on one full-price CD; now, in its latest mid-price incarnation, it is split across two. Even more unhelpfully, the break occurs between the second and third movements, thereby flouting Dvořák's specific request for *una piccola pausa*.

Libor Pešek's 1988 recording for Virgin Classics shows no decline in orchestral standards; indeed, the execution in every department is flawlessly elegant and seductively sweet-toned (the principal horn sports a gentle wobble in the best Czech tradition). The first movement (repeat included) goes swimmingly, the mood is exultant and all transitions are seamlessly negotiated. There's a comparable, almost nonchalant, ease to the ensuing *Andante con moto* although the genial Pešek doesn't quite capture the *dolente* marking for the cellos' opening cantilena. In the *Scherzo* the quicksilver virtuosity of the orchestra is a marvel, not a single detail being fudged despite the livelier than usual tempo. Conversely, the Trio is somewhat po-faced: Pešek might have made more of the *staccato* strings' cheeky *diminuendo* at four after fig E (4'02" and again at 4'51"). The finale, too, is a little soft-grained and lacking in symphonic sinew – a criticism that can be levelled at the performance as a whole.

Only one conductor has left us two recordings. On his 1992 outing for Chandos, **Jiří Bělohlávek** draws arguably the most articulate and sumptuous response of all from the Czech PO, and his patient, warmly affectionate and generously flexible approach is consistently endearing. Silky poise and songful ardour combine to especially potent effect in the slow movement, at the end of which (after marginally too long a pause) Bělohlávek effects an eloquently shaped transition into the *Scherzo*. It isn't all plain sailing, mind you. The absence of the first movement repeat will hardly raise eyebrows but Bělohlávek's decision to ignore the second repeat in the Trio is odd.

Fourteen years later, he returned to the work with the BBC SO. The basic conception is unchanged, although this time he takes every repeat, and again some may feel that he's a bit too liberal with his nudgings in the outer movements: the finale in particular risks sacrificing too much momentum (sample from fig F or 5'05" – the timing is identical on both recordings – and decide for yourself). That said, I do find this a marginally more communicative and integrated reading than its predecessor, and if the BBC SO can't match the astounding richness, composure and golden tone of its Czech counterpart, there's absolutely nothing slipshod or routine about its response – one registers an eagerness to please its then recently appointed new chief. More's the pity that the dryish studio acoustic is so unaccommodating.

Just two more versions emanate from the Czech capital. **Vladimír Válek**'s live recording on Supraphon with the Prague RSO from 2001 is ruled out of court by his decision to jettison no fewer than 21 bars towards the end of the symphony (at 10'23" between fig N and two before fig O). The effect is disfiguring in the extreme and makes a mockery of Dvořák's carefully planned scheme. Even without that baffling cut, Válek's account – charmless, foursquare and unyielding – would have been an also-ran.

Bohumil Kulínský's, on the other hand, is an exciting find, a very decently engineered performance of abundant character, judicious proportion and plentiful incident. A pupil of František Jílek, Kulínský has evidently thought long and hard about the task in hand. His reading marries keen observation – the horn's *fp diminuendo* in the penultimate bar of the first movement, for example – to an impressive cumulative grip. If it's local colour you're after, then those bagpiping winds and skirling strings in the *Scherzo* are hard to resist. Kulínský also nails the symphony's culmination; the trombone's final statement of the opening theme is as clear and triumphant as one could wish.

By comparison, **Stephen Gunzenhauser**'s 1989 Naxos recording with the Slovak PO is plain-spoken to a fault – his brisk, businesslike stroll through the slow movement is a case in point. For all the *Scherzo*'s agreeably earthy vigour, it never quite beams as it should, while the finale is held on too slack a rein for comfort (and something goes momentarily awry in the woodwind after the cellos' and basses' truculent introduction). The highlight is the first movement, which, after a humdrum start, develops into something engaging and heartfelt.

Zdeněk Košler's version with the same band from a decade earlier is a rather tidier affair but, even more than on the Naxos CD, the synthetic, multi-miked sound tires the ear, and there's an inexplicable jump in level for the *Scherzo*. Like Bělohlávek on his Chandos version, Košler opts out of both the exposition repeat in the first movement

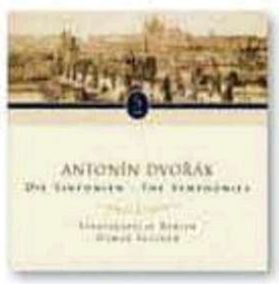
THE MAJESTIC CHOICE





Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / **Rafael Kubelík**
DG Ⓢ ⑥ 463 158-2GB6
A magnificently authoritative, enviably cogent and supple Fifth under the baton of this great musician – with the Berliners at their lustrous, eager best and warmly responsive to Kubelík's idiomatic insights. The finale in particular has an invincible inevitability about it.

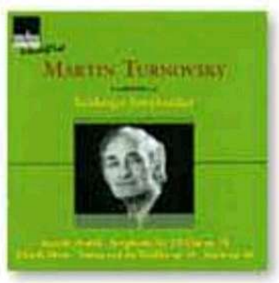
THE EARTHY CHOICE





Staatskapelle Berlin / **Otmar Suitner**
Berlin Classics Ⓢ ⑤ 0300036BC
Intensely alive, bright as a button and totally without idiosyncrasy, yet blessed with great intimacy of feeling in the slow movement, Suitner's is an enormously characterful and memorably combustible reading guaranteed to warm the cockles of any true Dvořákian.

THE RELAXED CHOICE





Bamberg SO / **Martin Turnovský**
Aulos Ⓕ AUL66002
Turnovský's direction is humane, unflashy and scrupulously faithful to both the letter and the spirit of the score, to which the Bambergers respond with pleasure and bonhomie. Indeed, the whole performance conveys a rigour and wisdom that are immensely gratifying.

PHOTOGRAPHY: TULLY POTTER COLLECTION, HANSJOACHIM MIRSCHEL/BERLIN CLASSICS, N. MAKSIMOV

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and the second repeat in the Trio section. That said, he certainly knows his way around this score, and my sole interpretative qualm of any significance concerns his excessive easing of tempo in the finale from six before fig F (4'40") – a tactic which, to my mind, undermines the full shuddering impact of that spooky *Quasi andante* episode later on, where the bass clarinet's brief but telling contribution anticipates the world of Dvořák's late symphonic poems.

Ivan Anguélov steers an altogether more linear course, his boundless vigour getting the better of him only at the very end: not only does he allow the playing of the Slovak RSO to become uncomfortably rowdy but he pays no heed to Dvořák's shrewdly calibrated *poco a poco crescendo* at one after fig P (11'40"). Otherwise, Anguélov's hugely spirited reading is entirely free from self-indulgence, and in the third movement – which bounds along while retaining an attractive bounce – he's virtually alone in sticking to the *tempo primo* for the Trio section. Oehms Classics' close-set sound leaps from the speakers, though there's the odd untidy corner and page-turn to suggest that session-time was tight.

I love the ruddy complexion of **Otmar Suitner**'s 1977 performance with the Staatskapelle Berlin. It's also crammed with new-minted detail: at eight after fig H or 6'35" in the first movement the second clarinet's bubbling semiquavers jostle for attention in the most playful way imaginable. In Suitner's gentle hands the slow movement distils great intimacy of feeling (when the first violins enter *pp dolente* at bar 10 or 0'24", the effect is supremely touching). How skilfully, too, he floats those suspended string chords which act as a bridge to the *Scherzo*, while the dotted rhythms in the Trio are lifted with such delicate grace that I defy you not to smile. Suitner's band may not possess the lustre of bigger-name outfits but there's no missing its abundant musicality and personality. The sound is reassuringly explicit, too, with wide stereo spread and clean-limbed bass-lines.

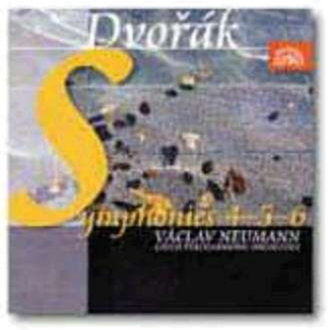
A disciple of Karel Ančerl, **Martin Turnovský** is another outstandingly sympathetic exponent, an interpreter of the old school who seems to have inherited his mentor's ability to bring a cherishable wholeness of vision to the finished article. The Bambergers respond in kind with beautifully blended playing (witness the trombones' colouring in the Trio's heaven-sent codetta and finale's second subject). From the outset there's a benign glow and relaxed bonhomie about this music-making, the relative restraint of the first two movements leading to the easy swagger of the *Scherzo* ("the sound of an orchestra enjoying itself" purr my listening-notes) and a masterfully paced finale, which powerfully demonstrates Turnovský's acute grasp of the bigger picture. The 1988 co-production with Bavarian Radio offers a truthful concert-hall balance, which misses only the last ounce of clarity.

Space is at a premium, so let me quickly dispense with a trio of stragglers. **Vladimir Ghiaurov** at the helm of the Plovdiv PO presides over a depressingly earthbound display. **Sir Andrew Davis**'s blandly efficient and terminally studio-anchored 1980 recording with the Philharmonia has precious little to commend it, save some tolerably spick and span orchestral playing. At least **Julian Kovatchev** and his sturdy Trieste band exhibit infinitely greater commitment as well as a genuine empathy for this repertoire but, with the best will in the world, it's difficult to recommend it: the finale in particular proceeds in unhelpfully piecemeal fashion.

Those irresistibly vocal clarinets at the start of **Rafael Kubelík**'s 1972 account with the Berlin Philharmonic immediately make you sit up and listen; and a glance at the score confirms that Dvořák's wonderfully buoyant melody does indeed rise from *piano* to *forte* within the first three bars. It's an auspicious launch to a reading which, in its expressive ardour, soaring lyricism and invincible grip, has rarely been matched. With the BPO on immaculate form, Kubelík's is a performance brimful of idiomatic insight and watchful sensitivity: in the first movement, for example, how subtly he emphasises the *grandioso* marking at figs A and H (0'47" and 10'24"); and what striking premonitions of the *New World* he locates in those fiery *tuttis* at the heart of the finale. Moreover, the Czech maestro's preference for antiphonally divided first and second fiddles really comes into its own in the *Scherzo*, where the violins' *forzando* cross accents from nine before fig B or 2'00" (6'59" in the *da capo* repeat) have an infectious physicality and swing about them. The recording still sounds well, if a little fuzzy around the edges and light in the bass. To the best of my knowledge, this commanding Fifth has only ever been available in the UK as part of Kubelík's complete set of Dvořák symphonies and is hampered by an irritating break (the finale spills onto another CD). Perhaps DG might be persuaded to release it separately?

Few interpreters transport us more beguilingly into the Fifth than **Mariss Jansons**, whose 1989 version for EMI with the Oslo PO exhibits an exhilarating assurance and chipper conviction that count

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY









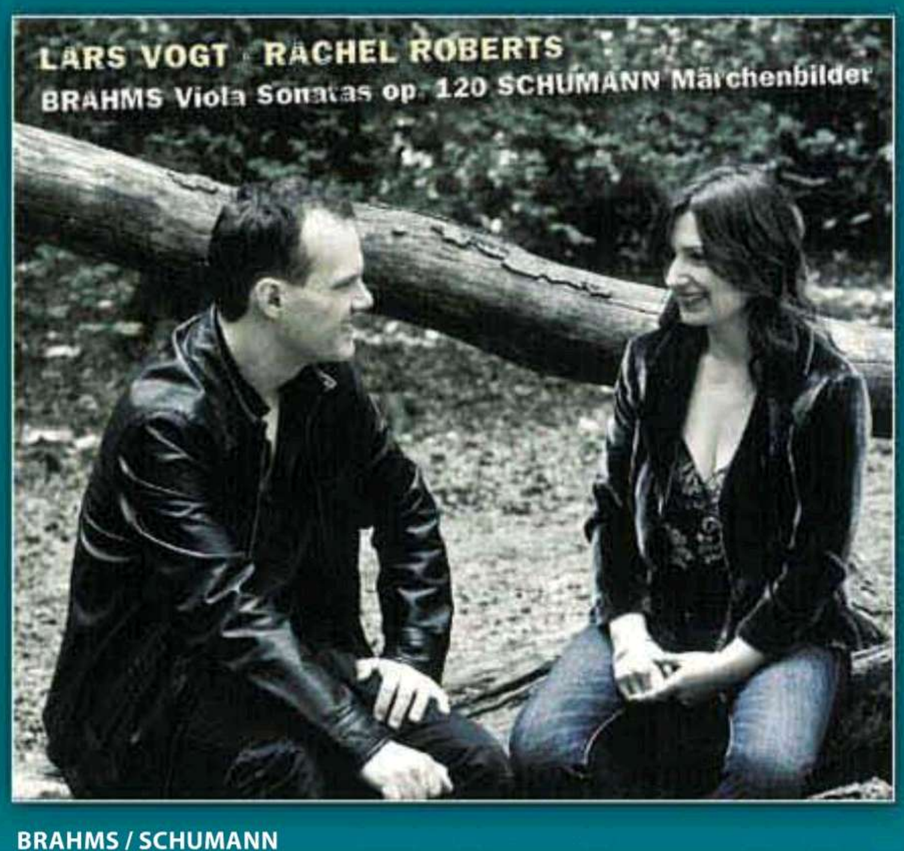
DATE / ARTISTS		RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1936	LPO / **Beecham**	Symposium Ⓢ ② SYMCD1096/7
1952	Czech PO / **Šejna**	Supraphon Ⓜ SU3852-2 (4/58R)
1965	LSO / **Kertész**	Decca Ⓢ ⑥ 430 046-2DC6 (4/92); Ⓢ ② 467 472-2DH2
1967	LSO / **Rowicki**	Decca Ⓢ ⑥ 478 2296DB6
1972	BPO / **Kubelík**	DG Ⓢ ⑥ 463 158-2GB6
1977	Staatskapelle Berlin / **Suitner**	Berlin Classics Ⓢ ⑤ 0300036BC
1979	Slovak PO / **Košler**	Brilliant Ⓢ 92369
1980	Philh Orch / **A Davis**	RCA Ⓜ ⑥ 82876 70830-2 (2/83R)
1982	Czech PO / **Neumann**	Suraphon Ⓜ ② SU3704-2; Ⓜ ⑥ SU3706-2
1987	RSNO / **N Järvi**	Chandos Ⓕ CHAN8552 (12/87); Ⓜ ⑥ CHAN9991
1988	Czech PO / **Pešek**	Virgin Ⓑ ⑧ 561853-2 (7/90R)
1988	Bamberg SO / **Turnovský**	Aulos Ⓕ AUL66002
1989	Slovak PO / **Gunzenhauser**	Naxos Ⓢ 8 550270 (11/91); Ⓢ ⑰ 8 501701
1989	Oslo PO / **Jansons**	EMI Ⓑ 585702-2 (7/90R); Ⓢ ③ 500878-2 (2/06); Brilliant Ⓢ ③ 92779
1990	Plovdiv PO / **Ghiaurov**	Capriole Ⓕ CA14005
1991	Prague PO / **Kulínský**	Multisonic Ⓕ 31 0072-2
1992	Czech PO / **Bělohlávek**	Chandos Ⓕ CHAN9475 (2/97)
1996	Orch of Giuseppe Verdi Th, Trieste / **Kovatchev**	Real Sound Ⓕ RS053 0134
2001	Slovak Rad SO / **Anguélov**	Oehms Classics Ⓜ ⑤ OC376 (1/06)
2001	Prague Rad SO / **Válek**	Supraphon Ⓑ ⑥ SU3802-2 (3/05)
2006	BBC SO / **Bělohlávek**	Warner Ⓑ ② 2564 63235-2 (2/07)

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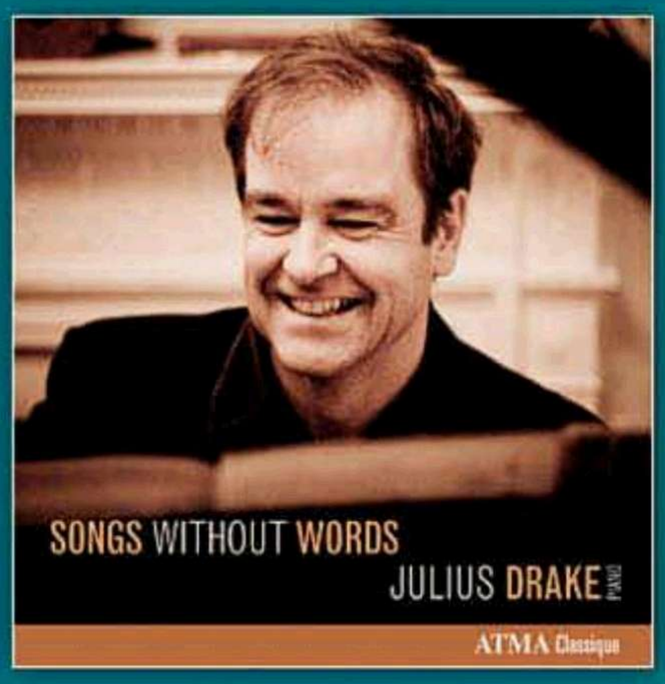
KEY RELEASE



BRAHMS / SCHUMANN
Lars Vogt & Rachel Roberts
AVI 8553181

A well-known viola player (Philharmonia, Philharmonic), Rachel Roberts is now professor at the Guildhall School of Music and here collaborates with Lars Vogt in this beautiful programme.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



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CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED



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Gramophone Editor's Choice



RECITAL – FRANCESCO PIEMONTESI
Chamber Choir Voces Musicales
AVANTI 10342

"Seriously classy pianism."
BBC Music Magazine
5* Sound / Performance

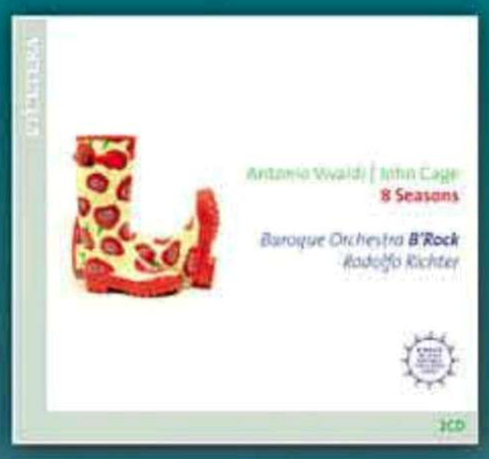
"A musician of rare intellingence."
The Sunday Times ****

NEW RELEASE



USPUD *ERIK SATIE*
Reinbert de Leeuw
KTC 1427 • 2CD

After setting the standard for performing Satie in the seventies, Reinbert de Leeuw has now recorded Satie's surreal ballet, Uspud.



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Sir Thomas Beecham: made the earliest available recording of Dvořák's Fifth

for a very great deal. The slow movement is distinctive, hypnotically concentrated at a more stately tempo than is customary, to contrast all the more boldly with the movements that flank it. Jansons's challengingly swift *Scherzo* doesn't faze his willing cohorts one bit, although it might perhaps have twinkled a bit more. Similarly, the Latvian maestro's finale is a superbly crisp, athletic creature, and I would only question his excessive (and troublingly inorganic) pulling back for that achingly lovely passage beginning at fig M or 9'31".

In the mid-1960s, the LSO set down two versions. **István Kertész**'s commercially successful Decca recording from December 1965 played a key role in raising the work's profile and, returning to it after a considerable period, I'm struck anew by its uncomplicated breeziness. The high spot is the *Scherzo*, which has a cheerful exuberance, but elsewhere Kertész paints a slightly featureless landscape, his easy-going direction falling some way short in canny instinct (the finale is too bluff and excitable by half). Nor is the playing of the LSO always ideally polished (in the *Andante con moto* there's some dodgy trombone intonation from eight before fig E or 5'23"). Kenneth Wilkinson's Kingsway Hall engineering is remarkably informative, providing you don't mind the intermittent rumble of the Piccadilly Line (beware, too, the ugly tape splice at seven after fig I or 11'06" in the opening movement). By the way, try and find Decca's bargain twofer containing Symphonies Nos 5, 7 8 and 9 if you want to avoid having to change discs.

Witold Rowicki's sparky February 1967 account for Decca is infinitely more articulate, a painstakingly prepared reading of formidable drive and intellect that shaves nearly four minutes off Kertész's (and, yes, he does observe the first-movement repeat). Rowicki's daringly propulsive tempo for the opening movement (there's nothing *ma non troppo* about this *Allegro*) sets the template, yet the orchestral playing loses nothing in composure and textures maintain a see-through clarity throughout. He also sets a blistering pace for the *Allegro molto* finale, yet eases back on the throttle for the second subject, which has plenty of songful warmth both times around. The two middle movements – separated, yet again, by far too long a gap – court rather less in the way of controversy, the Trio section in particular benefiting from Rowicki's rhythmic acuity and insistence on precise note values.

Neeme Järvi and the RSNO on Chandos give a big-hearted, impulsive rendering that's a little too unkempt and blowsy to challenge the best. That Järvi loves the symphony is not in doubt: his Trio fairly winks with mischief, while the finale's lyrical material is as tenderly shaped as any. His woodwind roster, too, prove an immensely personable bunch (the principal clarinet in particular). On the debit side, the washy acoustic blunts too many contours, while cruelly exposing some thinness of violin tone and swallowing too much detail (the flutes' and clarinets' rising *staccato* thirds from 10 before fig E or 7'45" in the first movement barely register). Nor is discipline all it might be: in the slow movement the first violins' decidedly ropy descending demi-semiquavers at 15 after fig E or 6'48" surely merited a retake.

I've left the earliest recording till last. It dates from October 15, 1936, and derives from privately made acetates of a Royal Philharmonic Society concert in Queen's Hall with the LPO under **Sir Thomas Beecham**. A volatile display it is, too, inimitably poetic one moment, downright wilful the next. Explosive and songful by turns, the first movement flies by the seat of its pants, Beecham's hyper-expressive treatment of the second subject extending to the ensuing *Andante con moto*, which he drags out to over nine minutes. Such is his magnetic personality, though, that he pulls it off. Similarly, the protracted transition into the *Scherzo* has to be heard to be believed. I should add that there are some damaging cuts in the last two movements. Ultimately, it's more a dazzling vehicle for Beecham and the high-class orchestra he had formed four years earlier – but what chutzpah!

THE TOP CHOICE





Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / **Karel Šejna**
Supraphon Ⓜ SU3852-2
This legendary account continues to entrance across the decades. Šejna's characteristically selfless, spontaneous and clear-sighted conception is free from artifice, and the Czech PO's matchlessly idiomatic playing is a joy.

The verdict

Make no mistake, Dvořák's F major Symphony has been exceptionally lucky on disc, and there is a healthy crop of versions that I wouldn't want to be without. Šejna's account is a classic of the gramophone. Nor should any self-respecting Dvořákian overlook the claims of Rowicki, Kubelík, Jansons and Bělohlávek's remake. Suitner, Turnovský, Kulínský and Anguélov will also handsomely reward collectors prepared to venture off the beaten track. A desert-island Fifth? For me, it has to be the Šejna, but if you just can't live with mono sound then I'd suggest Kubelík's imperious BPO rendering, Suitner's bright-eyed Staatskapelle Berlin version and Turnovský's delectably unforced Bamberg SO performance as nourishing alternatives.

Visit the *Gramophone* Player at www.gramophone.co.uk to hear excerpts from this month's featured recordings

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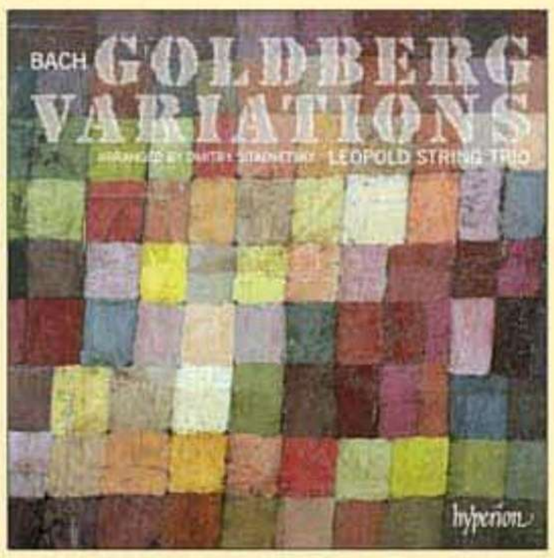
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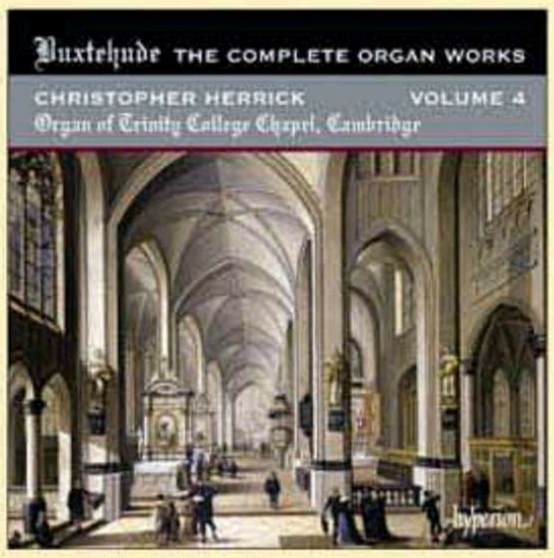
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ALINA IBRAGIMOVA
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BACH/ SITKOVETSKY
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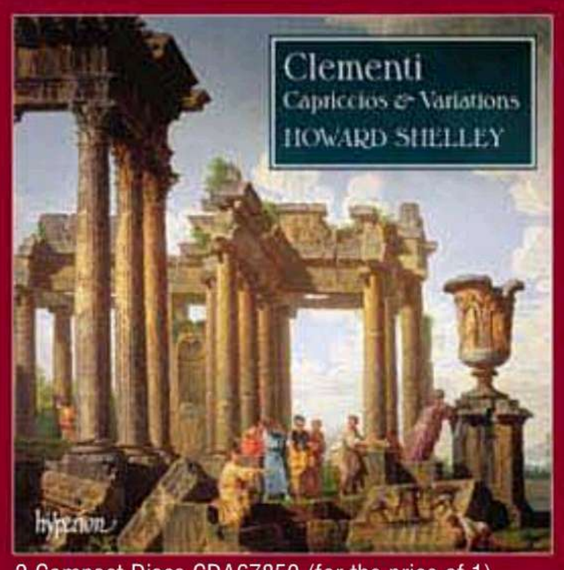
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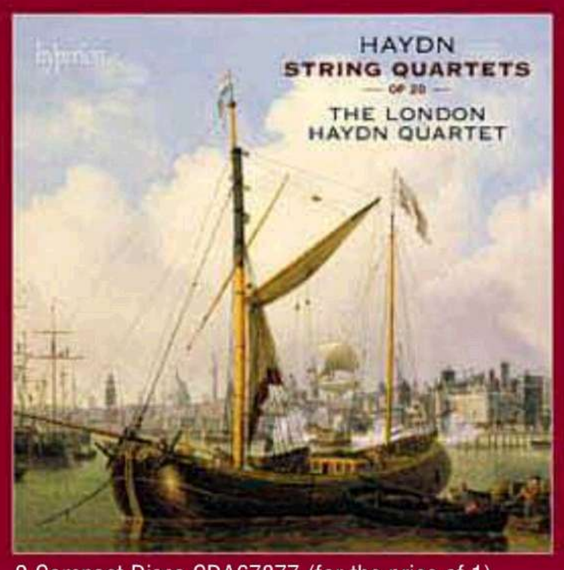
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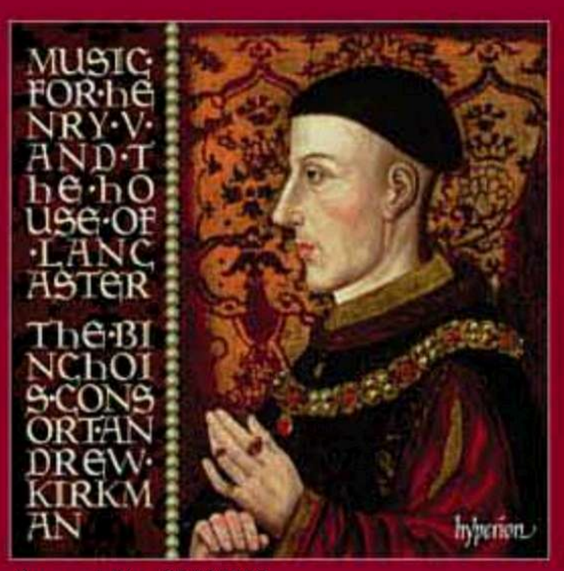
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ANDREW KIRKMAN



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MARTIN ROSCOE / BBC SSO / BRABBINS

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Editor's Choice
See page 12

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Orchestral

Definitive historic Barber • Kelemen's exceptional Bartók • Inspirational Martinů

Bacewicz

'Violin Concertos, Vol 2'
Violin Concertos – No 2; No 4; No 5
Joanna Kurkowicz *vn* **Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Łukasz Borowicz**
Chandos Ⓕ CHAN10673 (81' • DDD)

Less intensity in performance, please, of music that's already intense on the page



Composed between 1945 and 1954, these three concertos adopt the same formal scheme as the First Concerto on the previous volume in this series (A/09), and I'm not sure that consistency is such a virtue. All the first movements here have weighty matters at hand – the opening to the Fourth is especially portentous – yet Bacewicz's well-attested quickness of mind skips between subjects and moods like a distracted professor. Within the first five minutes of the Fourth we've had a Brahmsian reflection/response from the soloist, an apparently bittersweet waltz and then the full Hollywood number before more Brahms with wrong notes. If the slow movements betray an obvious debt to Bartók's night music, the model is at least appropriate to place, time and idiom.

I can't fault the technical address of Joanna Kurkowicz in these first recordings but I wonder whether a less highly pressured approach would suit music that's quite intense enough on the page, and leave me feeling less in need of fresh air. Comparing Kurkowicz (on Chandos again, 4/05) with Piotr Plawner (Hänssler) in works for violin and piano such as the Fifth Sonata (1951) and Partita (1955), I find Plawner more delicate, mercurial and songful where Kurkowicz's insistently "expressive" tone fits with slower, not to say heavier, tempi. It doesn't help that she seems to lean right into the microphone at times.

The slow burn of interest in Bacewicz's music seems to be revealing that the later, more experimental music also speaks with a more personal voice; too bad, then, that the Sixth of her seven concertos apparently remains in manuscript. **Peter Quantrill**

Barber Ⓗ

'Historical Recordings 1935-60'
Adagio, Op 11. Capricorn Concerto, Op 21. Cello Concerto, Op 22. Cello Sonata, Op 6. Commando March. Die Natali, Op 37. Dover Beach, Op 3. Essays for Orchestra – No 1, Op 12; No 2, Op 17. Excursions Op 20. Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op 24 (three recordings). Medea, Op 23 – Orchestral Suite. Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance, Op 23*a*. Prayers of Kierkegaard, Op 30. The School for Scandal Overture, Op 5. Three Songs, Op 10 – No 3, I hear an army. Four Songs, Op 13 – No 3, Sure on this shining night; No 4, Nocturne. Souvenirs, Op 28. String Quartet, Op 11. Symphonies – No 1, Op 9; No 2, Op 19 (two versions). Vanessa. Violin Concerto, Op 14 (two versions)
Artists include **Leontyne Price, Eleanor Steber** *sops* **Rosalind Elias, Jean Kraft, Regina Resnik, Jennie Tourel** *mezs* **Nicolai Gedda, Edward Munro** *tens* **Samuel Barber** *bar* **Giorgio Tozzi, George Cehanovsky** *basses* **Julius Baker** *fl* **Mitchell Miller** *ob* **Harry Freistadt** *tpt* **Ruth Posselt, Albert Spalding** *vns* **Orlando Cole, Zara Nelsova** *vcs* **Edward Biltcliffe, Robert Fizdale, Arthur Gold, Rudolf Firkušný, Vladimir Sokoloff** *pfs* **Boston Cecilia Society Chorus; Curtis Quartet; Boston Symphony Orchestra; CBS Symphony Orchestra; Janssen Symphony Orchestra of Los Angeles; Metropolitan Opera Company, New York; NBC Symphony Orchestra; New Symphony Orchestra of London; New York Philharmonic (-Symphony) Orchestra / Samuel Barber; Bernard Herrmann; Werner Janssen; Serge Koussevitzky; Dimitri Mitropoulos; Charles Munch; Artur Rodzinski; Thomas Schippers; Arturo Toscanini; Bruno Walter**
West Hill Radio Archives Ⓜ ⑧ WHRA6039 (9h 49' • ADD). Bonus CD-ROM includes notes on the performances

A marvellous exploration that revisits many unique Barber recordings



A treasure-trove of historic Barber recordings. The earliest and one of the best known is his own performance of *Dover Beach* recorded in 1935 with the Curtis Quartet. A real discovery is the broadcast of the Adagio for strings and the First Essay with the NBC Symphony under Toscanini on November 5, 1938. These were the actual sounds that propelled Barber into the front rank of American composers, able to command the attention of the big-shot conductors from Europe. The Adagio is nicely paced and the First Essay has extra bits in the opening section that were later removed. There are also differences in the first part of the Second Essay, premiered by the New York Philharmonic-Symphony under Bruno Walter in 1942.

Cellist Orlando Cole, who died last year at 101, was, along with Barber, one of the first students at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia when it opened in 1924. The Cello Sonata is a live recording from 1972 introduced by Cole, for many years cellist in the Curtis Quartet, and who remembers being in on the genesis of this now standard classic.

There are two delightful piano items – Rudolf Firkušný in the *Excursions* and Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale in the duet version of the catchy *Souvenirs*. Recorded in the early 1950s and still sounding well, both of these works show Barber in lighter moods, captured perfectly by these performers.

Barber's visit to London in 1950 was probably at the high point of his reputation in England, before the reaction against his conservative style gathered momentum. He was particularly pleased with the recordings he conducted for Decca at Kingsway Hall in December 1950. He took his conducting seriously, had lessons well in advance and even brought his coach to the sessions. With the New Symphony Orchestra of London he recorded the orchestral suite *Medea* and the Second Symphony (later destroyed but reinstated), and was particularly pleased with Zara Nelsova in the Cello Concerto – all of which are included here.

There are three recordings here of *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*. Eileen Farrell, in the first broadcast with the CBS Symphony Orchestra under Bernard Herrmann in 1949; Eleanor Steber, for whom it was written, but recorded with piano, live at Carnegie Hall in 1958; and a robust and vocally stunning performance from Leontyne Price, well recorded live at Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic under Schippers in 1959. *Vanessa*, with its Chekovian libretto by Menotti, is the original live recording from the Met in 1958, issued on LP, and well worth preserving for its fine cast, including Steber, and its real sense of drama.

Another CD offers Barber's 1958 interview with James Fassett, a transcription of which is included in my book *Samuel Barber Remembered: A Centenary Portrait* (U of Rochester Press: 2010), as are the interviews quoted from by Barbara Heyman in her very

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generous 97 pages of notes with photographs on the CD-ROM. She is Barber's definitive biographer and her copiously annotated Thematic Catalogue is in press now. There are 33 pages of notes in French from Pierre Brévignon, who started Capricorn, the French Samuel Barber Society, and whose full-scale biography will be out later this year. This set of CDs is a gold mine for anyone wanting to study Barber's revisions and early performances, many of which are not otherwise available.

Peter Dickinson

Beethoven

Symphonies – No 4, Op 60; No 7, Op 92

Royal Flemish Philharmonic Orchestra / Philippe Herreweghe

Pentatone Ⓕ PTC5186 315 (76' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded seven years ago – this pairing has now been superseded by later cycles



The one surprising fact about this coupling is that, unless I've been remiss in not spotting them in a previous incarnation, the actual recordings have been a long time reaching us. The date given is November 2004, which is significant in that the following seven years have witnessed the appearance of some markedly superior rivals, Emmanuel Krivine's complete cycle with La Chambre Philharmonique for one (Naïve, 7/11). In reviewing Krivine's Fourth Symphony in these pages I noted how his "mastery of transitions benefits the palpitating leap from *Adagio* to *Allegro vivace* in the first movement". Another viable alternative in the Fourth features Iván Fischer and the Budapest Festival Orchestra (Channel Classics, 1/11 – coupled with the *Pastoral*), where virtually every bar seethes with life: Fischer's imagination and ever-attentive ear see to that.

Philippe Herreweghe's approach treads a rather more neutral path, although the playing is good enough and the overall approach to both symphonies is quietly convincing. What it lacks, ultimately, is dynamism and personality, the kind that keeps Krivine's Seventh not only on the move (tempo isn't everything, after all) but piping hot. True, considerate balancing is a laudable attribute – in the Seventh's *Allegretto* Herreweghe is good at keeping melody and countermelody on equal terms – but there are more pressing issues to consider, the *con brio* element of the Seventh's finale being one, and there Krivine wins hands down.

Pentatone's sound quality is warm without being especially luminous; and while it would be unfair to berate this worthy release as being surplus to requirements, it's hardly a front-runner.

Rob Cowan



Kocsis and Kelemen: warm and muscular

Hungarians RHAPSODISE

Bartók is blessed in his native interpreters

Bartók

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Violin Concerto No 2, Sz112.
Rhapsodies – No 1, Sz87; No 2, Sz90

Barnabás Kelemen *vn* Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra / Zoltán Kocsis

Hungaroton Ⓕ HSACD32509 (77' • DDD/DSD)

Hungarian musicians in a clear front-runner for the Second Violin Concerto



If you haven't yet responded to my enthusiasm for Arabella Steinbacher's Pentatone recording of Bartók's Second Concerto with the Suisse Romande under Marek Janowski (11/10), hold fire. Not that I retract, but this hot recent rival offers a viewpoint you may well prefer. It also provides, as one of the fill-ups, an alternative version of the concerto's finale, more showy, orchestrally, than the one we know but, for the closing pages, without the soloist (the familiar revision was Zoltán Székely's idea).

Barnabás Kelemen is a more muscular player than Steinbacher, with a grittier edge to his tone, although he brings equal measures of warmth to the slow movement and bows virtually as much light and shade as Thomas Zehetmair does on his fine 1995 recording with the Budapest Festival Orchestra under Iván Fischer (Berlin Classics). Twelve years earlier still, Fischer and Kocsis had formed the BFO with musicians "drawn from the cream of Hungary's younger players", whereas in 1997 Kocsis took over the directorship of the rival Hungarian National Philharmonic and was soon achieving similarly thrilling results with his new players.

I make the point because both Fischer and Kocsis provide their soloists with vivid accompaniments, Fischer scoring highest for lightly inflected colour, Kocsis for rhythmic edge and keenness of attack. Zehetmair is the more volatile player and Berlin Classics delivers a warmer recording, softer and more ambient than the dramatic sound stage Hungaroton provides for Kelemen and Kocsis; and Steinbacher and Janowski enjoy the benefit of Pentatone's luminous, three-dimensional recording for a reading that sits, interpretatively, between the mercurial Zehetmair and the red-blooded Kelemen.

As to the fill-ups, both Zehetmair and Steinbacher offer the youthful, rather Straussian First Concerto, whereas Kelemen gives us the musically more sophisticated (and in my view superior) two Rhapsodies. Both pieces are also presented with alternative versions of their respective second (fast) movements, the First in a viable revision, the tougher-grained Second in a technically challenging but stimulating "original". Kelemen lunges at both like a man possessed: his bow knows no fear and his orchestral collaborators are with him all the way. An exceptional disc. **Rob Cowan**

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Birtwistle

Night's Black Bird. The Shadow of Night. The Cry of Anubis[a]

[a]**Owen Slade** *tuba*

Hallé Orchestra / Ryan Wigglesworth

NMC Ⓕ NMCD156 (56' • DDD)

Recent orchestral works by a former *enfant terrible* of British music



In *Lachrymae* and *Nocturnal*, his two John Dowland-derived works, Britten explored common ground between the melancholic intimacy of the late-16th/early-17th-century originals and his own genius for understated lamentation.

By contrast, in the pair of orchestral works from 2004-05 recorded here, Sir Harrison Birtwistle has used a melodic fragment from Dowland's "In darkness let me dwell" as the pretext for very un-Britten-like explorations of the darker side of human experience. If *The Shadow of Night* had been called "Funeral Music for a Hero", its stark anti-triumphalist spirit would not seem at all incongruous. In *Night's Black Bird* the lament is less expansively elaborate but still intense to a degree Britten might have found distasteful. Yet Birtwistle's expressionistic grandeur is the perfect complement to Britten's conflicted restraint, and no less persuasive as an act of homage to a revered precursor.

The earliest composition on the disc offers a characteristic take on the theme of painful alienation that has reached its fullest expression to date in Birtwistle's 2008 opera *The Minotaur*. Anubis – a god with a jackal's head – is, like the Minotaur, a mythic hybrid, and in *The Cry of Anubis* the solo tuba – the excellent Owen Slade – contrasts bleating torment with elements of a richly refined elegy. In a welcome if rare excursion into contemporary music, and recorded with tinglingly immediate atmosphere, the Hallé under Ryan Wigglesworth sound on top form throughout. **Arnold Whittall**

Bloch · Goldschmidt · Korngold

Bloch Schelomo **Goldschmidt** Cello Concerto, Op 23 **Korngold** Cello Concerto, Op 37

Julian Steckel *vc* **Rheinische Philharmonie State Orchestra / Daniel Raiskin**

CAvi-Music Ⓕ 8553223 (54' • DDD)

Enticing concertos with a Jewish flavour from a prize-winning cellist



Julian Steckel, winner of many prizes, has studied under Heinrich Schiff, among others, and has also been principal cellist of the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra under Marek Janowski. Here he shows his mettle and musicianship very impressively in three contrasted Jewish *concertante* works, creating a firm, warmly full-bodied tone and easy virtuosity. He is absolutely at home in Bloch's richly lyrical and hauntingly languorous *Schelomo*, with its prayerful Semitic harmonic flavour, and here Daniel Raiskin brings out the detail of the colourful accompaniment very tellingly, firmly holding the orchestral tension over which the soloist soliloquises.

Korngold's Concerto is Hollywood-inspired but none the worse for that, as it features a totally memorable lyrical theme (which Steckel relishes). It was originally intended for the Bette Davis film *Deception*, which featured a six-minute performance of a cello concerto as its dramatic centrepiece. The Concerto, still in a single movement, was expanded to 12 minutes for concert performance, and very effective it is.

But it is in the Goldschmidt Concerto that Steckel has the opportunity to deliver real virtuosity in the brilliantly jaunty final Tarantella, and once again Daniel Raiskin and the excellent Rheinische Orchestra rise to the occasion. They draw out the immediate appeal of the second-movement *Caprice mélancolique*, followed by the haunting *Quasi sarabande*, where the lyrically intense cello-playing is again memorable. The recording is well balanced within a spacious acoustic which, overall, is quite enticing. **Ivan March**

Brahms

Violin Concerto, Op 77[a].

Hungarian Dances, WoO1 (arr Joachim)[b]

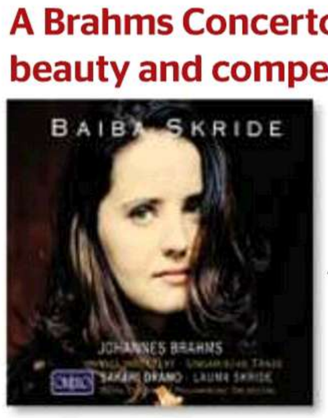
Baiba Skride *vn* [b]**Lauma Skride** *pf*

[a]**Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra / Sakari Oramo**

Orfeo Ⓑ ② C829 112A (94' • DDD)

[a]Recorded live, January 2009

A Brahms Concerto of great beauty and compelling intensity



This performance of the Violin Concerto was recorded at a concert in January 2009. It reveals Baiba Skride as the complete violinist, with an exceptionally precise, reliable technique, splendid tone and presence, and discerning musicianship, who makes the quietest moments tell. And her playing is complemented by a sympathetic, finely balanced accompaniment. I love the way that her entry in the finale at 0'48" is so light and playful, throwing into relief the moment when she storms in with the octaves of the second theme. The *Adagio* is full of fine expressive touches, yet maintains a sense of gentle onward flow. In the first movement, however, I did wonder whether she lingered too much over the more meditative passages. The effect is often extremely beautiful but I was reminded that Isabelle Faust (Harmonia Mundi, 6/11) is able to do justice to each element in Brahms's patchwork while maintaining the movement's symphonic momentum. Faust, however, doesn't quite match Skride's compelling intensity in more virtuoso passages, such as the approach to the recapitulation (tr 1, 12'07").

Skride is also a persuasive advocate for the *Hungarian Dances*. Hagai Shaham with Arnon Erez (Hyperion, 8/08) give a more full-blooded account, maybe, with broader vibrato and, on occasion, a more forceful style, but the Skride sisters, with their idiomatic, unexaggerated introduction of gypsy-style rhythmic flexibility, succeed in characterising each dance more vividly. Not surprisingly perhaps, their ensemble is impeccable, and though Baiba, in a printed interview, confesses she finds the Joachim arrangement "terribly difficult", she appears perfectly at ease throughout, offering a fine tone and pure intonation. **Duncan Druce**

Brahms · Schoenberg

Brahms Piano Quartet No 1, Op 25 (orch Schoenberg) **Schoenberg** Begleitungsmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene, Op 34. Chamber Symphony No 1, Op 9*b*

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

EMI Ⓕ 457815-2 (74' • DDD)

The Berliners shine in Brahms and Schoenberg



Why did Schoenberg orchestrate Brahms's Piano Quartet No 1? Simon Rattle runs with Schoenberg's idea that Brahms originally miscalculated the balance between pianist and strings, and his orchestral revisioning was about "wanting to hear everything"; those who reckon Schoenberg's sense of humour was no laughing matter tend to take too literally his mildly amusing aside about it being "Brahms's Fifth".

But the first-movement *Allegro* does take the weight and world-from-his-window latitude of pukka symphonic writing and Rattle lodges it far inside our collective memory-bank of Brahms's sound world. The BPO woodwind and strings, with horn priming the canvas, are absolute dead ringers, but a deeper truth emerges from Rattle's delight in (or celebration of) moments where Schoenberg's orchestration goes a bit Mike Yarwood. With bass drum and crash cymbal oom-pahs, the march section of the *Andante* has no place inside the Brahmsian symphonic archetype. Rattle frames it like some gross intrusion, while the gypsy-toned finale's high-velocity pace and jibbery attack (hear those

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lower string *pizzicatos*!) scrapes off any remaining veneer of symphonic pleasantries. Compared with this, Robert Craft's famous 1964 Chicago SO recording (Sony) is featureless and limp.

Why *Begleitungsmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene*, music for a cinematographic scene that Schoenberg didn't want anyone to film? Rattle views the work like a cinema of the imagination as Schoenberg's packed, suffocating details gradually pan around the "screen", with an occasional caterwaul jumping through a squeaky door to bolster the drama. The slowly moving foreground, placed against a backdrop of hissing brass at 3'12", is vividly lit, creating the illusion of a split-screen simultaneous event, and the dramatic grain elongates as the music evolves towards a wholly unexpected subplot: a flute playing bad-guy lines of implied tonality.

And why does Rattle perform Schoenberg's bountiful 1935 orchestration of his First Chamber Symphony? If you were music director of the BPO you, too, would surely choose it over Schoenberg's original chamber orchestra version, which Rattle recorded with the BCMG in 1993 (EMI, 4/95). How meticulously he probes its internal tensions – crashing, burning, fragmenting tonality on the brink of the brink; how the Chamber Symphony relates to Schoenberg's subsequent orchestral music (at 2'38" in the second movement – Five Orchestral Pieces, anyone?); the profound strangeness of disembodied instrumental solos moving through Schoenberg's fixation on the Tristan chord during the *Lento*. The omnivorous virtuoso shout of the final moments spills beyond the usual orchestral threshold, the BPO demonstrating why they're the BPO.

Philip Clark

Brian ®

Symphony No 1, 'Gothic'

Eva Jenisová *sop* **Dagmar Pecková** *contr* **Vladimír Doležal** *ten* **Peter Mikuláš** *bass* **Slovak Opera Chorus; Slovak Folk Ensemble Chorus; Lúčnica Chorus; Bratislava City Choir; Bratislava Children's Choir; Youth Echo Choir; Slovak Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra; Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra / Ondrej Lenárd**

Naxos Ⓢ ② 8 557418/19 (114' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded 1989. From Marco Polo 8 223280/81 (7/90)

Brian ®

Symphonies – No 20; No 25.

Fantastic Variations on an Old Rhyme

National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine / Andrew Penny

Naxos Ⓢ 8 572641 (63' • DDD)

Recorded 1994. From Marco Polo 8 223731 (6/96)

Gothic Sym – comparative version:

BBC SO, Boult (4/10) (TEST) SBT2 1454

Brian awareness grows apace with further reissues





I write this a few days before the *Gothic*'s Proms premiere, its first complete performance in the UK for 31 years. So this year's 21st anniversary reissue of Ondrej Lenárd's pioneering Marco Polo recording, on Naxos (with the rebranded Slovak – not Czechoslovak – RSO, I notice) in a limited edition, is most timely. Michael Oliver was lyrical in his original review of both work and performance, which overcame his previous misgivings about the music and its creator. Lenárd's account still sounds well in Günter Appenheimer's expert recording, though since then it has been challenged by Testament's archival release of Boult's 1966 professional premiere. I outlined the pros and cons of both in my review of the latter last year so won't repeat myself; suffice it to say, though, that both recordings serve Brian's vision superbly, and both grace my shelves.

No alternative versions have yet been released of Symphonies Nos 20 and 25 or the early *Fantastic Variations on an Old Rhyme*. The last-named, along with *Festal Dance* (coupled with Symphonies Nos 17 and 32), is all that remains of Brian's original First Symphony, a (probably) never fully realised spoof symphonic treatment of "Three Blind Mice" which is worked up into a delightfully Straussian yet rather off-beam quasi-symphonic poem. Tovey thought highly enough of it to include it in his *Essays in Musical Analysis*, and Michael Oliver once again gave a warm welcome to the original issue on Marco Polo, justifiably in my view, as the disc juxtaposes three works from different periods in Brian's career: early for the *Fantastic Variations*, (late-)middle for No 20 – one of the more expansive of Brian's later symphonies with its wonderful slow middle movement – and (early-)late for No 25. Penny produced fine accounts with the Ukrainian National Symphony Orchestra, for whom the idiom was quite alien. Occasionally that shows in the playing but it is no more of an issue than for a British orchestra performing, say, Kalinnikov. The sound is still of high quality and the restoration of these recordings, especially at super-budget price, will be immensely welcome to the Brian Society as well as to those coming anew to this famously incalculable composer. **Guy Rickards**

Debussy

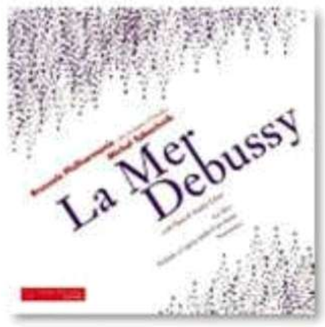
La mer. Nocturnes[a].

Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune

[a]**Flemish Radio Choir; Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra / Michel Tabachnik**

Brussels Philharmonic Recordings Ⓕ BPR001 (58' • DDD)

A spontaneous-sounding but not fault-free first release on Brussels' own label



A protégé of Markevitch and Boulez, Geneva-born Michel Tabachnik steers a sleek and dynamic course through *La mer*, drawing playing that is immensely spirited and (for the most part) laudably polished. I'd have preferred greater suppleness in "Jeux de vagues" – and I miss, too, the last ounce of grip that exponents such as Coppola, Désormière, Ansermet, Reiner, Karajan and Haitink have brought to this masterpiece: in "Dialogue du vent et de la mer" the final appearance of the lofty noonday invocation (initially heard on the horns towards the end of the first movement) falls short in clinching majesty. On the whole, though, this remains a *La mer* to reckon with.

Elsewhere, Tabachnik presides over a watchful, unmannered *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune*. His reading of *Nocturnes* likewise has much to commend it: he brings ample poise, mystery and tenderness to "Nuages", while "Fêtes" combines joyous bustle and infectious rhythmic snap (the *pizzicatos* at fig 8 or 2'06" positively leap off the page). "Sirènes" isn't quite as successful. Granted, Tabachnik extracts every ounce of expressive fibre from the music (those imploring strings from fig 6 or 5'05" really do tug at the heart-strings), but his choir lacks allure and there isn't quite the hypnotic concentration and focus achieved by, say, Boulez in Cleveland (DG, 3/95).

Tuttis tend to cloud within the slightly hollow studio acoustic, which also imparts a glassiness to the violin tone (especially above the stave). Plenty to admire none the less, and an orchestral partnership worth monitoring, I'd say. **Andrew Achenbach**

Grieg

EDITOR'S CHOICE

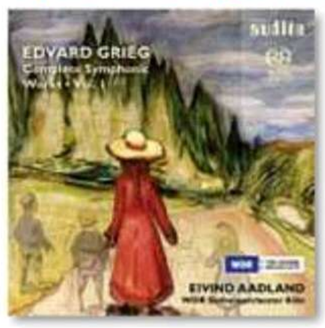
'Complete Symphonic Works, Vol 1'

Funeral March for Rikard Nordraak. Symphonic Dances, Op 64. Peer Gynt – Suite No 1, Op 46; Suite No 2, Op 55

WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne / Eivind Aadland

Audite Ⓕ AUDITE92 651 (73' • DDD/DSD)

An auspicious launch for a projected cycle of Grieg's music for orchestra



The launch of a third new survey of Grieg's orchestral music in the last decade, following Bjarte Engeset's for Naxos and Ole Kristian Ruud's for BIS, starts here (the first volume of a promised five) with the most obvious popular items. But any sense of mere repetition of well-known repertoire in (perhaps) improved recorded sound is challenged immediately by the idea of starting with the four 1898 *Symphonic Dances*. No 2

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aside, the *Allegretto grazioso* that has become quite a Proms lollipop (and, of course, a Beecham speciality), these are meaty pieces of real orchestral (if not quite symphonic) substance which deserve to be better known. All were orchestrated by Grieg from piano originals, an adventure probably encouraged by the composer's guest appearances with the Leipzig Gewandhaus and Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics. This tempting of the miniaturist into full orchestral dress – a process also represented here by the *Peer Gynt* Suites – is especially effective in No 4, the darkest and longest piece.

The young maestro Eivind Aadland is a native of Grieg's Bergen, steeped through his family in the Norwegian folk-music tradition. An ex-concertmaster of the Bergen Philharmonic, he turned to conducting with appointments with the European Community Chamber Orchestra and the Trondheim Symphony. To the WDR players he has communicated a lightness of touch and a fine Grieg balance in which the winds sing out almost like *concertante* soloists. But such an approach is not so featherlight that it cannot challenge the famous Beecham/RPO recording (and its stunning viola line) in "Ingrid's Lament" from *Peer Gynt* and its ingenious take-over of the pain of the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Then, in contrast to the more string-dominated music that precedes it, the *Funeral March for Rikard Nordraak* at the end of the release has the bracing feel of an open-air band performance. With recording matching the scale of the music-making, Aadland's new cycle – which, in these works, is more alive than Ruud's and better played than Engeset's – has hit the ground running. **Mike Ashman**

Mahler

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Symphony No 3

Mihoko Fujimura *contr*

Bamberg Symphony Orchestra / Jonathan Nott

Tudor Ⓕ ② TUDOR7170 (104' • DDD/DSD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Joseph-Keilberth-Saal, Konzerthalle Bamberg, May 25-28 & 30, 2010

A scrupulous continuation of Jonathan Nott's noteworthy Mahler cycle



This is proving to be a searchlight among Mahler cycles – a conductor, Jonathan Nott, and an orchestra, the Bamberg Symphony, who throw up more revealing detail and say more about these symphonies than many of the established heavyweights. It isn't the spectacle or power of Nott's Mahler that singles him out (in that he must yield to the likes of Bernstein) but rather an intimate and highly idiomatic understanding of the style and sensibility of the music that sets him apart. No sooner has the great unison horn summons cleaved the wintry air at the start of this great pantheistic hymn than Nott spots the marking *molto ritenuto* and instantly, crucially, intensifies the sense of time and space inherent in the slowly oscillating motif in low horns and bassoons.

Nott is scrupulous about such details but, far more important, he knows why they are there. Note the seismic *glissandos* and withered harmonies of the opening paragraph, then the gradual freshening and lightening of texture, with sharply etched woodwind voices in marked contrast to those doleful trombone orations. The climax of the movement brings an absolutely thrilling sprint to the finishing line, euphoric trumpets provoking the final adrenalin rush.

Mahler's flora and fauna are by turns elegant, characterful and pithy; an evocative alpine-like halo of atmosphere surrounds the distant posthorn solos. Personally, I prefer a darker contralto colour in the third movement's Nietzsche setting but the plangent Mihoko Fujimura is wonderfully focused and aware. Nott, in common with many latter-day interpreters, subscribes to the view that the marking *hinaufziehen* ("drawn upwards") should be taken literally in the cor anglais and oboe's bird-like cries. I don't agree. It's a feeling, not an instruction – Mahler would surely otherwise have marked it as a slide – and its awkwardness becomes a distraction.

But how special is Nott's account of the great *adagio* finale. It isn't just the heightened luminosity of the sound but the sense of a big string section made extraordinarily intimate through the suppleness and sensitivity of the playing. That great moment of stasis where a transfigured flute descends over the proceedings like a benediction ushering in the trumpet-led brass chorale is, as it should be, totally transcendent. Bernstein, Chailly and now Nott surely lead the field.

Edward Seckerson

Rachmaninov

Symphony No 3, Op 44.
Caprice bohémien, Op 12.
Prince Rostislav

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Gianandrea Noseda

Chandos Ⓕ CHAN10677 (74' • DDD)

Noseda's Rachmaninov survey reaches the Third Symphony



Early and late Rachmaninov rub shoulders on this latest release in the BBC Philharmonic's impressive series, with a particularly fine performance of the Third Symphony. Those waves of nostalgia coupled with the piquant instrumentation and incisive rhythmicality typical of Rachmaninov's idiom in the last decades of his life are ideally caught by Noseda and an orchestra that has been well drilled in finding the appropriate timbres and textures.

Noseda also does a laudable job with the *Caprice bohémien* and *Prince Rostislav*. Both were student works: the Caprice completed in 1894 in the wake of the success accorded to Rachmaninov's gypsy-orientated opera *Aleko* at its 1893 Bolshoi premiere; *Prince Rostislav* even earlier, when the composer was still studying at the Moscow Conservatory. The Caprice takes its cue both from the verve that drives the Men's Dance in *Aleko* and also from the aura of brooding and fatalism that emanates from the opera. Structurally the piece can sound strangely lopsided but Noseda somehow manages to give it more balance, investing the long slow section with emotional power and a sense of direction, and allowing the orchestra to unleash plenty of colour and energy as the music picks up momentum. *Prince Rostislav*, with a leaning towards melodrama that Rachmaninov was soon to rid himself of, shows a good grasp of prevailing trends in Russian music – particularly that of Tchaikovsky – together with a secure instinct for relating a poetic narrative in musical terms. The performance here makes the best of both its attractions and imperfections.

Geoffrey Norris

Rachmaninov

'A Tribute to Rachmaninoff'
Piano Concerto No 3, Op 30[a]. Elegy, Op 3 No 1[b]. Preludes, Op 23 – No 4; No 7; No 10; Op 32 – No 5; No 11; No 12[b]

Vladimir Feltsman *pf* **[a]Russian National Symphony Orchestra / Mikhail Pletnev**

Nimbus Alliance Ⓕ NI6148 (65' • DDD)

Recorded [a]live at the Bolshoi Hall, Moscow Conservatory, 1992; [b]2010

Selected comparison:

A touching tribute not to the composer but to Feltsman's and Pletnev's teacher



Confusingly, the disc gives top billing to Vladimir Feltsman (*b*1952, Moscow) on an album entitled "A Tribute to Rachmaninoff", with a recent black-and-white photo of Feltsman looking down at an older colour photo of his younger hirsute self, heard in a concerto performance played in memory of Jacob Flier (1912-77). Feltsman opens with a newly recorded selection of solo works (Wyastone Leys, 2010) of heart-stopping beauty. Not least of these is the Elegy, Op 3 No 1, carelessly left unnumbered on Nimbus's cover and booklet (the celebrated

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Jiří Bělohlávek: full of fire

Instant BENCHMARK

Bělohlávek inspires the BBC Symphony

Martinů

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Symphonies Nos 1-6

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Jiří Bělohlávek

Onyx Ⓑ ③ ONYX4061 (3h 2' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Barbican Hall, London, 2009-10

Cpte Syms – selected comparisons:

Bamberg SO, N Järvi (BIS) BIS-CD1371/2

Prague Rad SO, Válek (SUPR) SU3940-2



When considering Martinů's symphonies, two points are worth bearing in mind: first, that all six date from Martinů's maturity; and second, the first five followed each other year on year. Play them back to back and the inevitable risk is that they may all begin to sound too much alike, but such is Jiří Bělohlávek's skill as a Martinů interpreter that the effect is still of impressive stylistic variety. Bělohlávek usefully offers thumbnail descriptions of all six works, calling the First, "epic, tragic and energetic", the Second "lyric, poetic and vivid", the Third "dramatic and Bohemian", the Fourth "impressionistic, cosmopolitan, colourful and joyful", the Fifth "visionary", and the Sixth a "song of longing and hope".

These are not Bělohlávek's first Martinů symphony recordings but I would assert that they are his best. The others I know of are mostly with the Czech Philharmonic, Nos 1 and 4 from the early '90s (Chandos), plus a much earlier, bright-and-bushy-tailed Fourth with the Prague Symphony (Panton, 1979) – all good performances, but which lack the weight and muscle of these live BBC remakes. And there are the Supraphon recordings from 2003-09 of Symphonies Nos 3-6 which score highest where clarity is most needed, in the finale of the Third, for example, and the opening of the Sixth (the spacious acoustic of the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum helps).

Perhaps the most significant interpretative difference between the Chandos and Onyx versions of the First Symphony is in the profound *Largo* (one of the great Martinů slow movements), where the later version is broader than its predecessor by more than a minute, though the contrast is less to do with tempo than with the darkened mood and texture. It's interesting that Martinů himself considered the Third to be "actually" his first symphony, having had Beethoven's *Eroica* in mind when he wrote it. "It is a work of revolt," he once claimed, "of manly defiance, of grim yet firm determination, challenging fate." Karel Šejna's premiere recording (Czech PO) has an even firmer grip than Bělohlávek's but this new live version is surely the best we've had in years. It's interesting that both of Bělohlávek's recordings are unique in restoring 30 bars of previously cut material (part of the build-up towards the first movement's anguished central climax), and there also differences in the Fourth. Both symphonies are played from revised editions.

I should however make special mention of Vladimir Válek's largely undervalued Supraphon set with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra where, although some tempi are slower than normal, a degree of transparency compensates, especially at the start of the Sixth, where the jittery muted trumpet line rises above the swarming accompaniment without disregarding Martinů's *piano* marking. Válek is again impressive in the Fifth, almost as dogged as Ančerl in the finale but capturing the buoyant rhythm (echoes of Beethoven's Seventh this time) more vividly than most. Bělohlávek is faster, which leads to a slight sense of rhythmic ambiguity near the start of the *Allegro*, but thereafter things go swimmingly and the performance, like the others in the set, is full of fire and interpretative interest.

In short, Bělohlávek and the BBC SO are now my top recommendation for the Martinů symphonies, with Järvi and the Bamberg Symphony a credible budget option and Válek a useful supplement for those who value clarity above weight, excitement and dynamism. The Onyx set also has the benefit of Mike Crump's excellent booklet-notes. Needless to say, compelling older recordings under, for example, Neumann (the whole cycle), Šejna (No 3), Ansermet and Kubelík (No 4), Ančerl (Nos 5 and 6) and Munch (No 6) shouldn't be forgotten.

Rob Cowan

PHOTOGRAPHY: ONYX CLASSICS

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C sharp minor Prelude is No 2 of the set, described for some reason by the booklet writer as "infamous"). This is followed by a selection of Preludes from Opp 23 and 32, the composer's own preferred way of programming them. Feltsman's richly upholstered tonal palette is superbly captured in this sequence, a prelude of Preludes if you will, that eases us into his live 1992 performance of the D minor Concerto from the Bolshoi Hall of the Moscow Conservatory.

It's a fine account which, as Feltsman's chattering passagework beneath the orchestra's first movement exposition immediately demonstrates, favours the pianist in the recorded balance – not to the extent of obscuring the important contributions of the wind and brass soloists, although the piano part is not always given such prominence in recordings. Feltsman opts for the shorter of the two first-movement cadenzas and in the finale, after lingering more than most over those touching five bars of *Weltschmerz* (7'20"), heads home in triumphant style to well-earned cheers. Both Pletnev and Feltsman studied under Flier. They do him – and Rachmaninov – proud.

Jeremy Nicholas

Ruders

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Piano Concerto No 2[a]. Bel canto[b]. Serenade on the Shores of the Cosmic Ocean[c]

[b]**Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen** *vn* [a]**Vassily Primakov** *pf* [c]**Mikko Luoma** *acco* [c]**iO String Quartet** [a]**Norwegian Radio Orchestra / Thomas Søndergård**

Bridge Ⓕ BRIDGE9336 (63' • DDD)

The Serenade for accordion and string quartet reveals sounds of other worlds



The fount of creative energy that has sustained Poul Ruders since the late 1960s shows no sign of running dry. Or so, at least, this trio of works from the past decade affirms. Most recent of all is the Piano Concerto (2009-10), written for Vassily Primakov and delivered by him with a superb range of colour, attack and atmosphere. The opening, as sugary as the transfiguration scene from a late-Romantic opera, is deceptive. Just a few seconds later we are going down an alleyway of Shostakovian bleakness, which in turn leads to brittle, toccata-like momentum. The poetry of the slow movement and the scintillating brightness of the finale could easily sound opportunistic, since they reference well-established piano-concerto manners. But they don't come across that way, because everything is on a far higher imaginative plain than, say, the latest piano concertos of Shchedrin (which make a good point of comparison because the two composers share a magpie approach to style and a non-schematic approach to musical flow).

Bel canto, a commission for the 2004 Carl Nielsen International Violin Competition, provides a haven of introspection that once again probes expressive depths at the same time as beguiling the ear. But surely most impressive of all is the nine-movement Serenade for accordion and string quartet, also composed in 2004. This begins in the edgy, modernist vein that Ruders seems able to tap with as much conviction as he does any other. But it soon reveals other worlds, from echoes of the Parisian café at one extreme to despondency and spiritual depth at the other. The spirit here is inspired by Carl Sagan and the urge for a kind of modern Enlightenment. Almost inevitably, given the scoring, there is an occasional recall of Gubaidulina (her classic *Seven Words*). Imagine the Russian's symbolic sound world shot through with the energy of Ligeti and you have some idea of the rewards in store from this marvellous disc, all of which is superbly played and recorded.

David Fanning

Sarasate

'Music for Violin and Orchestra, Vol 3'

Navarra, Op 33. Introduction and Caprice-Jota, Op 41. Concert Fantasy on Mozart's Die Zauberflöte, Op 54. Muiñeiras, Op 32. Nouvelle fantaisie sur Faust de Gounod, Op 13. Barcarolle vénitienne, Op 46

Tianwa Yang *vn* **Navarra Symphony Orchestra / Ernest Martínez Izquierdo**

Naxos Ⓢ 8 572275 (59' • DDD)

Tianwa Yang plays with dexterity and lightness in her Sarasate survey



Despite doing without any of his most popular pieces, this third instalment of Sarasate's music for violin and orchestra makes a most attractive programme. Sarasate may not be a very ambitious composer, relying on uncomplicated melodic forms and simple harmonies, but he's constantly inventive.

The most famous piece here is *Navarra* (recorded by David and Igor Oistrakh). Tianwa Yang plays both the virtuoso violin parts and her performance is bright and spirited, sounding entirely natural and "real". Her account, however, is not quite as exciting as the notably spontaneous concert performance by Gil Shaham and Adele Anthony (Canary Classics, 1/10).

Yang is splendidly equipped as a Sarasate violinist, with her clear tone, pure intonation, impressive dexterity and light touch. The opening unaccompanied drone passage of *Muiñeiras* is startlingly beautiful. The two opera fantasies are lively and entertaining, especially that on *The Magic Flute* where, for the most part, Sarasate sensitively keeps to the original harmonies while cleverly developing and decorating Mozart's melodies. The Barcarolle introduces subtle orchestral touches to heighten the mysterious nocturnal atmosphere. With the *Introduction and Caprice-Jota*, Tianwa Yang comes into competition with Sarasate himself, who recorded (with piano) a shortened version in 1904. She is more accurate than he, especially with regard to tuning, and of course, thanks to modern recording strengths and colourful orchestration, the sound is much more beautiful. But I missed the composer's manic energy, as well as his graceful, elegant *portamentos*. For all that, Yang's playing is consistently lovely, capturing an essential part of the music's spirit.

Duncan Druce

Sibelius

'The Sibelius Edition, Vol 12'

Seven Symphonies, including the original and revised versions of Sym No 5[a]. Fragments and early versions of movements from Symphonies Nos 1-4 and 7[b]

Lahti Symphony Orchestra / [a]Osmo Vänskä, [b]Jaakko Kuusisto

BIS Ⓑ ⑤ BIS-CD1933/5 (5h 19' • DDD)

Recorded [a]1995-97; [b]2010

A revelatory cycle, repackaged with a bonus disc of alternative versions



Osmo Vänskä's credentials as a first-rate Sibelian symphonic interpreter were confirmed in 1995 with the release of the Fifth Symphony in its 1915 version (4/96), so its presence in this complete set is most apt. It also gives the issue a huge advantage over all rivals which, of course, include the final Fifth. BIS has wisely redistributed the symphonies chronologically across the discs, rather than retaining the original dispositions (9/97, A/97, 12/97, 7/98). Taken together, this is a comprehensively original cycle, revealing without being controversial, direct in utterance yet precisely calculated. It is certainly, in my view, the finest survey of the past three decades.

The main focus here, however, lies in disc five, recorded last year using early versions of movements and sections from all bar the Fifth and Sixth, the gestation of the Sixth being as complex as its predecessor's but not so publicly exposed in concert. The First Symphony receives the most extensive treatment, with five fragments (including the entire *Scherzo*, which is 33 per cent longer than the published version) taking up a third of the disc's playing time. Differences range from relatively minor orchestrational adjustments, as in track 2, to significant structural divergences, as in the *Scherzo*; even

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the iconic opening clarinet solo was originally four bars longer.

Symphonies Nos 2 and 3 also required significant reworking to their openings and slow movements. While some changes are minor, others include the elision of episodes or phrase extensions where Sibelius, frankly, ran perilously close to lapsing into light music. Each final decision to change, omit or (in a few cases) extend is vindicated, whether to clarify textures or tighten up the structure. Listen to the passages from the Fourth Symphony (including, again, the entire *Scherzo*) and the Seventh's coda, the latter of which – as with the whole of the 1915 Fifth – one listens to in amazement, wondering how he didn't get it right first time!

The major differences are precisely detailed by track on pages 122-26 (in English only) of the first of the two multilingual accompanying booklets. Kuusisto and the Lahti musicians present the items with crystal clarity. While it could be argued that the differences can only be appreciated fully in context (we only get the *Scherzos* of Nos 1 and 4 and the central variations of No 3 in full), this would have necessitated complete versions of Nos 1 and 3 and two of No 7 (to accommodate the coda's misfiring versions). Splendid sound makes this indispensable for all devotees of Sibelius.

Guy Rickards

Tchaikovsky · Mendelssohn

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Mendelssohn A Midsummer Night's Dream – Overture, Op 21 **Tchaikovsky** Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique', Op 74

Philharmonia Orchestra / Sir Charles Mackerras

Signum Ⓕ SIGCD253 (58' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, February 8, 2009

A valuable addition to the late Sir Charles Mackerras's live legacy



There is an immediacy and incisive, almost forensic clarity to this 2009 live performance that makes for tremendous drama at points of crisis. The crack of doom heralded by timpani at the start of the development is all-out electrifying (accentuated, of course, by a gripping, almost inaudible "fade to black" in the bass clarinet beforehand) – indeed, the forcefulness of the timpani and brass-playing throughout is nothing if not intimidating. And what a dark, saturating *sostenuto* from the strings at the climax – broadly paced, with trombones bearing down unforgivingly.

The late, great Sir Charles Mackerras's way with style shows itself in tiny details: the anticipatory intake of breath before the wistful second subject arrives, the hint of *portamento* in the phrasing of it. Then, in the zippy march, an exciting but almost infinitesimal *ritardando* into the final reprise, all guns blazing. The ache of the *Adagio lamentoso* is not wrung out of the string sound but rather is implicit in the harmony. The final surge, one feels, is where this music has been heading all along; and note how Mackerras clears the *tutti* sound to let those ugly grimaces in stopped horns come through. The final pages, the ebbing away of pulse, is most affecting. But why keep in the applause when the Festival Hall audience has had the decency to remain quiet after the final bar has faded? The rest should be silence – nothing but silence.

Mendelssohn's Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* leavens Tchaikovsky's dark night of the soul with shimmering textures and spry articulation. So much of what Mackerras did was governed by an acute sense of what articulation can achieve – and this is a superb example.

Edward Seckerson

Vivaldi

'The French Connection, Vol 2'

Concertos for Strings – RV127; RV133; RV150. Flute Concertos[a] – 'Il gran mogul', RV431*a*; RV440. Bassoon Concerto, RV473[b]. Chamber Concerto, 'La notte', RV104[c]. Concerto for Violin, Oboe and Strings, RV543[d]. Violin Concerto, RV365

[a]**Katy Bircher** *fl* [d]**Gail Hennessy** *ob* [bc]**Peter Whelan** *bn* **La Serenissima / Adrian Chandler** *vn*

Avie Ⓕ AV2218 (79' • DDD)

Two world premieres among a selection of concertos with French connections



The film *The French Connection* had a sequel, so why not indeed the Vivaldi CD? Having won a 2010 *Gramophone* Award with what we must now call "The French Connection, Vol 1", Adrian Chandler courts further success with a second volume of concertos whose gallicisms range from patrons to genuine style-imprints, to the provenance of the original manuscript paper. As before, these things will ultimately matter little to the listener; they do not contribute to an overall sound or mood as much as the composer's own personality does. More realistically, the disc is a coming together of diverse works that would not otherwise have kept one another company, put together by a mind brimming with Vivaldi minutiae and including two world premiere recordings alongside such better known fare as the *La notte* flute concerto.

La Serenissima remain buoyant and sweet, eschewing the taut, opaque sound of many of today's Baroque orchestras, and embracing something more relaxed and open, helped by a pleasing bloom. The main soloists are as they were in Vol 1, with flautist Katy Bircher never letting her impressive virtuosity shut out softness of tone or approach (as she shows in her gentle fade into the final ritornello of RV440), and bassoonist Peter Whelan likewise combining agility with lyricism and laid-back grace (the latter especially in the nocturnal slow movement of RV473). Gail Hennessy, by the way, is only half a soloist; although delivered without fault, her part in the unusual RV543 is entirely doubled by solo violin.

The premieres are RV431*a*, a cheerful flute concerto which was known to exist but which surfaced complete only last year; and the airily expansive violin concerto RV365, which Vivaldi's much-rewritten manuscript has left in an ambiguous state. Chandler chooses his own solutions here but his eloquent performance of it is in any case reason enough to give it listening time. **Lindsay Kemp**

Walton

Symphonies – Nos 1; No 2. Siesta

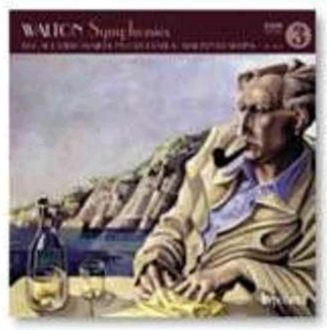
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins

Hyperion Ⓕ CDA67794 (78' • DDD)

Syms Nos 1 & 2 – selected comparison:

Lille Nat Orch, Hughes (BIS) BIS-SACD1646

A pairing of Walton's symphonies – the First even rivalling Previn's classic disc



Walton's two symphonies make an ideal coupling, yet it is surprising how rarely they have been offered together. The BIS version listed above is highly recommendable, remarkably idiomatic for a non-British orchestra, but the new issue regularly outshines it in bite and romantic passion. This version of the iconic First Symphony even rivals the version that André Previn and the LSO recorded for RCA in 1966 (1/67[R]), a classic account that has comfortably stood the test of time.

What is so good about the new Hyperion performances is the control of tension. The first movement in particular depends on the build-up of repeated figures in extended *crescendos*, often one on top of the other. Yet Brabbins is masterly in such passages, and equally so in the haunted slow movement, the emotional core of the piece, from its chill opening flute solo onwards. There is ample bite in the second-movement *scherzo*, marked *con malizia*, and the ripe resolution in the extended finale with its unmistakably optimistic tone is satisfyingly warm, with each of the fugatos played with remarkable clarity, helped by the excellent Hyperion sound. The brief trumpet solo in the coda with its echoes of the "Last Post" has rarely sounded so tender.

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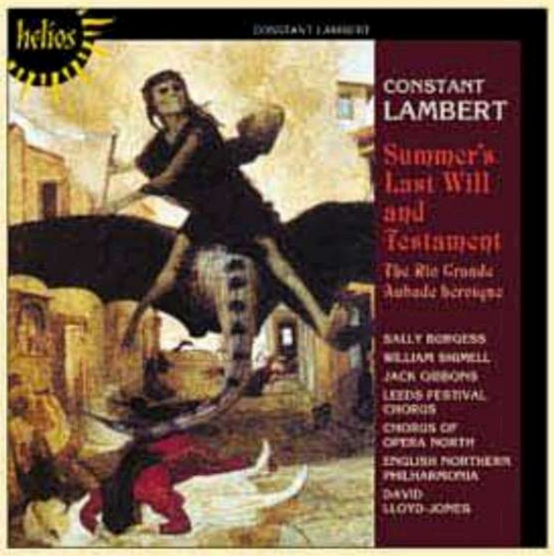
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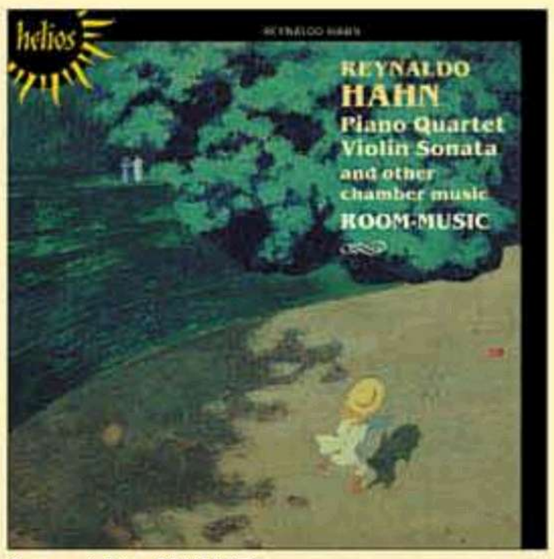
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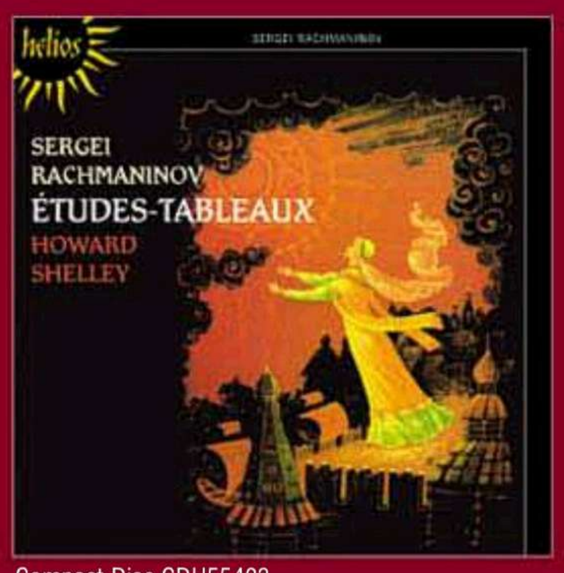
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Usually, the Second Symphony of 1956-60 is set in contrast with First, which reflected the darkness of mood of the 1930s, yet Brabbins remarkably seems intent on bringing out the similarities, for this is the most powerful account of this three-movement work that I can remember, most strikingly in the opening *Allegro molto*. The central *Lento assai* is then warmer than usual in its lyricism, while Walton's tongue-in-cheek references to 12-note rows in the finale are carried off with just the right touch of humour in the "raspberries" of the brass-writing. The big contrasts in dynamic and mood in the variations which follow are then highlighted, again helped by the recording.

The whole disc is a credit not only to the conductor but also to the quality of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, which can stand comparison with any rival, not least in the quality of the woodwind solos.

Edward Greenfield

'Czech Music for Strings'

Haas Study (compl Peduzzi) **Janáček** String Quartet No 1, 'The Kreutzer Sonata' (arr Tognetti). Suite for String Orchestra **Martinů** Sextet, H224*a*

Janáček Chamber Orchestra

Chandos Ⓕ CHAN10678 (65' • DDD)

Haas's miniature Study is the standout work in this selection



Janáček dominates this record of Czech music, even though he is represented by an uncharacteristic early work and by an arrangement. The leading Janáček scholar John Tyrrell calls the Suite of 1877 "a rag-bag of influences", which is perhaps a little hard. Undoubtedly the shadow – or rather the light – of Dvořák falls across the first and last movements, and Janáček must surely have heard the soaring strings of the Prelude to *Lohengrin* before writing the *Adagio* of the second movement (a sound that also haunts Martinů's *Andantino*). But even at this stage of his career, in his early twenties, he was forming a voice and had a fine ear for sonorities. This is well caught by the excellent chamber orchestra that takes his name, and by this recording. The arrangement of his First String Quartet gives the group something to play and is cleverly done (with the addition only of a double bass), but the enterprise seems to blunt the painful acuity of the drama.

Martinů's Sextet is another arrangement, by the composer himself, of his String Sextet, and is beautifully scored with his usual fine ear, though as so often with him it seems to be a triumph of skill over substance. Not so the nine-minute Study by Pavel Haas. It is difficult to detach responses from the awareness that this heroic figure, one of Janáček's best pupils, wrote it in Terezín in 1943 for the camp orchestra, a year before his murder in Auschwitz. It was dedicated to Karel Ančerl, who was also in Terezín, survived, and rescued it. There is in it a little of Janáček, perhaps something of Hindemith, and the creative energy, especially in a truly invigorating fugue, is inspiring. **John Warrack**

'Italia'

Tartini Violin Concerto, D115. Violin Sonata, 'Devil's Trill' **Veracini** Violin Sonata, Op 2 No 6 – Largo **Vivaldi** Violin Concertos – 'Grosso Mogul', RV208. Op 8 No 2, 'Summer', RV315; RV358. Nulla in mundo pax sincera, RV630. Giustino – Vedro con mio diletto

Nicola Benedetti *vn*

Scottish Chamber Orchestra / Christian Curnyn

Decca Ⓕ 476 4342DH (76' • DDD)

Nicola Benedetti returns to the Baroque in an attractive programme

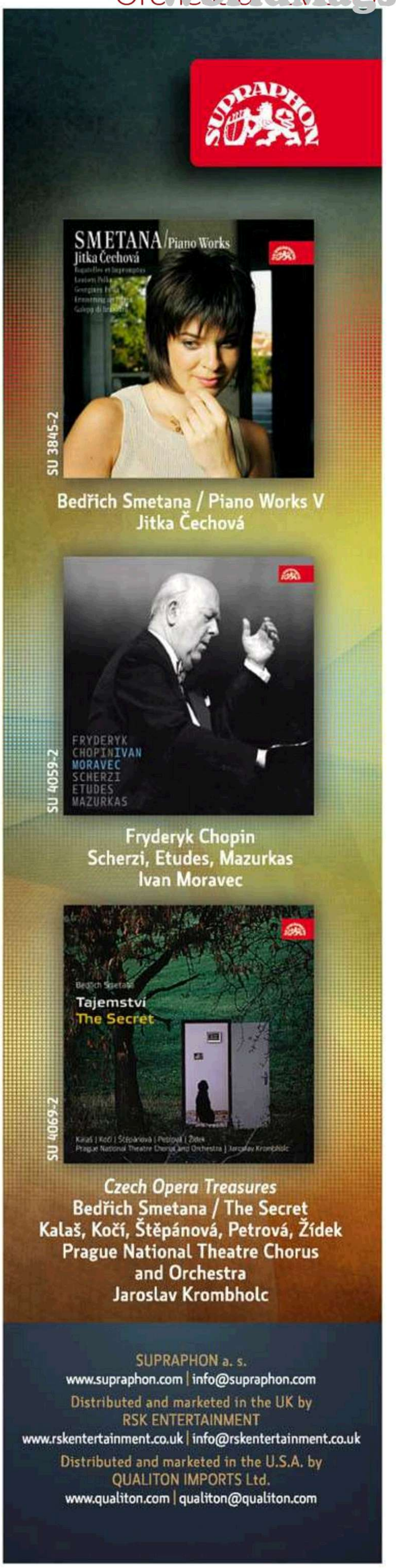


Despite her Italian background, Nicola Benedetti, we're told, "never expected to feel quite so at home" in the Italian Baroque repertory. But perhaps the truth is that any violinist would find the writing of Vivaldi, Veracini and Tartini wonderfully idiomatic and rewarding. With a Baroque-type bow, using very little vibrato (but with modern strings), she produces a sound that, for the most part, is cool and clear but by no means inexpressive. The SCO match her elegant phrasing and provide an accompaniment that's alert, spirited and sensitive. It conveys a brightly polished image of the music, most enjoyable, and bringing a virtuoso aspect to the fore (for instance, in the *Grosso Mogul* Concerto).

It's possible, however, especially with period instruments, to achieve a wider expressive range, thus doing fuller justice to such daring music. In the finale of *Summer*, Benedetti, with the SCO, demonstrates brilliant string-playing in a stormy style, but Gottfried von der Goltz and the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra (DHM) sound far more like a real storm, with lashing wind and rushing water.

It's good to hear the *Devil's Trill* Sonata shorn of its ponderous clichés. Benedetti is particularly persuasive in the slower sections, her playing touching and intimate. In the two Vivaldi arias, she's fluid and elegantly expressive (the Veracini movement is, in effect, a third aria). These pieces, interspersed between the concertos, make for an attractively varied programme, with rarities, such as the beautiful Tartini Concerto, set alongside the well-known items.

Duncan Druce



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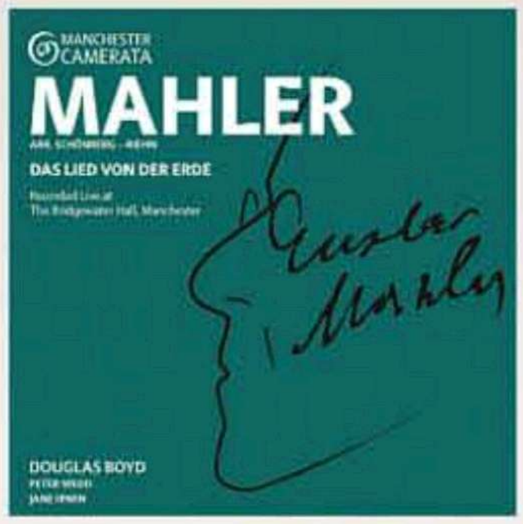
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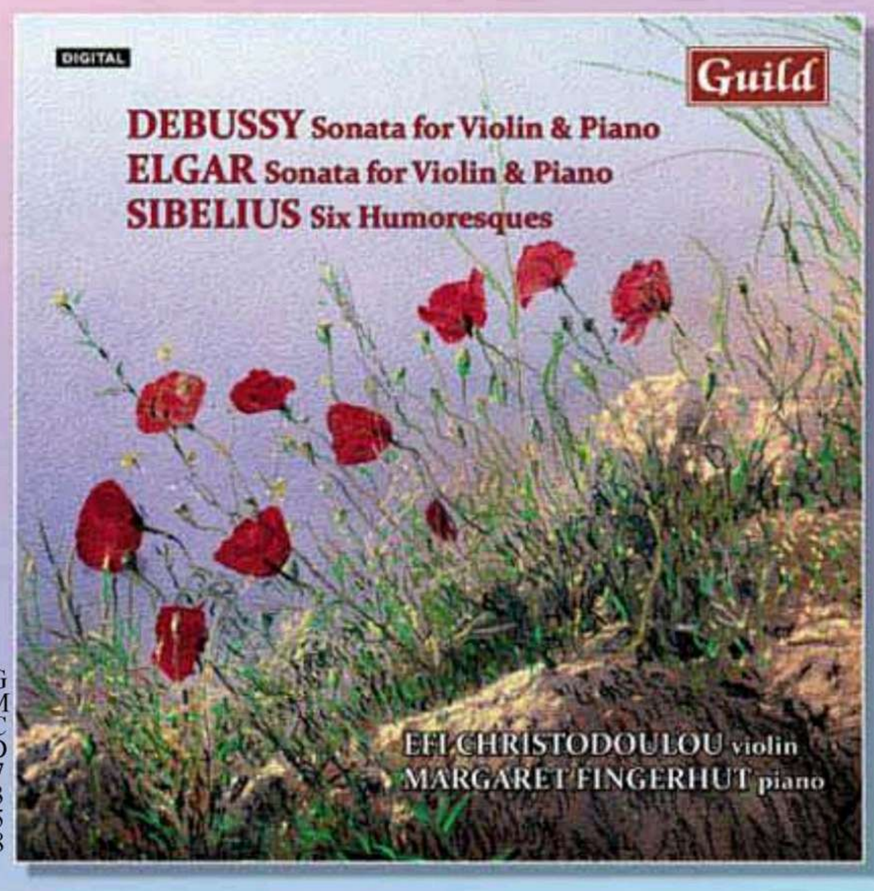
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Sweet and THRILLING

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All smiles: Vineta Sareika does her bit for Vieuxtemps

Vieuxtemps

Violin Concertos – No 1, Op 10[a]; No 2, Op 19[b]; No 3, Op 25[c]; No 4, Op 31[d]; No 5, Op 37[e]; No 6, Op 47[f]; No 7, Op 49[g]

[a]Vineta Sareika , [b]Hrachya Avanesyan , [c]Nikita Boriso-Glebsky , [d]Lorenzo Gatto , [e]Yossif Ivanov, [f]Jolente De Maeyer , [g]Harriet Langley *vns* **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Liège / Patrick Davin**

Fuga Libera Ⓜ ③ FUG575 (3h 10' • DDD)

Making the case for Vieuxtemps's unfashionable bravura concertos



Now relegated by the dictates of musical fashion and Wagnerian hegemony to brief or absent entries in reference books, Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-81) has been routinely ignored by fiddle players and (if they've heard of him) concert promoters. But if his concertos were good enough for Ysaÿe (Vieuxtemps's greatest pupil), Kreisler, Heifetz and Perlman, then they should be good enough for the rest of us.

The seven concertos have all been recorded before (the two best, Nos 4 and 5, several times) but are presented here complete for the first time, each work played by a different young, unknown virtuoso. That in itself is worth a few cheers; but when almost all the performances, in uniformly excellent sound, challenge, if not supplant, those already available, then the enterprising Fuga Libera label can feel justifiably proud of its vision and execution.

Vineta Sareika has, arguably, the most difficult task with the extravagantly taxing First Concerto. In its opening movement, lasting 22'47", Vieuxtemps hurls his entire arsenal at the soloist after what must be the grandest opening of any violin concerto (at its premiere in 1840 the public applauded before Vieuxtemps had shouldered his instrument). Sareika surmounts every challenge in thrilling style (more so than Paul Rosenthal on Biddulph), setting the tone for the whole set.

The first three concertos are, to be sure, heavily indebted to Paganini and melodically not so far removed from the *bel canto* of Donizetti and Bellini, but Vieuxtemps's lively orchestration, his sure-footed construction and lyrical grace are thoroughly his own. Marginally, I prefer Hrachya Avanesyan and Nikita Boriso-Glebksy in Concertos Nos 2 and 3 to the formidable Misha Keylin (playing both – Naxos, 12/97). The adventurously constructed Concertos Nos 4 and 5, famously revived by Heifetz (he recorded No 5, the "Grétry", twice), are stunningly well played by the sweet-toned Lorenzo Gatto and Yossif Ivanov respectively, even if neither quite matches Heifetz's level of supercharged intensity. There is little to choose between them and Viviane Hagner's tremendous 2009 recordings of both (Hyperion, 7/10). Concertos Nos 6 and 7 are weaker, less virtuoso works.

Jolente De Maeyer is a fine advocate of No 6 but I wondered if Harriet Langley is quite as in love with the genre as her peers. Gérard Poulet's 1997 recording (now on Naïve) of both works has the edge, especially in the attractive Tarantella/ Habanera finale of No 7.

This handsomely presented fold-out set of discs with its detailed booklet (attached to same and in French, Dutch and English) comes warmly recommended to every lover of bravura violin works with a sweet tooth.

Jeremy Nicholas

PHOTOGRAPHY: M. ERNEUX

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Chamber

Ysaÿe for ensemble • Dutch violin sonatas • Mullova goes vernacular

Beethoven

Septet, Op 20[a]. Sextet, Op 71[b]

Scharoun Ensemble Berlin (Alexander Bader *cl* Markus Weidmann *bn* Stefan de Leval Jezierski *hn* [a]Wolfram Brandl *vn* [a]Micha Afkham *va* [a]Richard Duven *vc* [a]Peter Riegelbauer *db*) with [b]**Gaspare Vittorio Buonomano** *cl* [b]**Sarah Willis** *hn* [b]**Henning Trog** *bn*

Tudor Ⓕ TUDOR7146 (59' • DDD/DSD)

Beethoven's early chamber music in slightly breathless performances



Beethoven came to be irritated by the success of his Septet, and told his publisher that the best that could be said of the Sextet was that he'd done better since. All the same, they have a freshness and vigour that has made the Septet, in particular, endure in popularity as a splendid example of 18th-century serenade music. Perhaps it is also with hindsight that the Scharoun Ensemble seem to want to confer on it some Beethovenian symphonic energy that is not always suitable. The liveliness of the opening *Allegro* is a touch hard-driven; and when the Minuet is taken at almost *scherzo* speed – though one can admire the horn player, who takes in his stride the notorious triplet passage that has tripped up many a player – there is too little of the contrast that Beethoven must have meant between this Minuet and the movement that he did mark *Scherzo*, and made sure of it by adding *Allegro molto e vivace*. The final *Presto* is taken breathlessly. It is in the *Adagio*, relished by the clarinettist, that the playing relaxes most fully.

The less familiar Sextet for wind sets off with a fresh tempo and good balance within an acoustic that is a little resonant. The *Adagio*, with a nice opening bassoon solo, is charmingly played, and the Minuet, though so marked, responds to the sense of hunting sounds when the horns allow the hint of an open-air bray to enter their tone. The final Rondo is chirpily played. **John Warrack**

Cerha

Bruchstück, geträumt[a]. Neun Bagatellen[b]. Instants[c]

[b]**Zebra Trio;** [a]**Klangforum Wien / Sylvain Cambreling;** [c]**WDR Symphony Orchestra / Peter Rundel**

Kairos Ⓕ 0013152KAI (66' • DDD)

The half-dreamt music of a composer who operates below the radar



Kairos's previous Cerha release was anchored around the deep-listening fabric of his 1970s orchestral set *Spiegel* (A/10). It reminded us of a lowlier class of composer who, operating under the radar of those considered "essential" to the evolution of post-war composition – your Boulezes, Stockhausens, Ligetis, Kagels, Xenakises – could never achieve anything like whatever "big time" success contemporary music can bestow, a state of affairs that, maybe, had/has nothing to do with their music or ideas but everything to do with their reluctance to schmooze or to rabbit on to anyone who'll listen about the magnitude of their genius.

Graham Greene once wrote about how writers wanting to comment on the world need to blend into the background; they need room to manoeuvre, observe, assess. Cerha's like that. His 2009 ensemble piece *Bruchstück, geträumt* ("Fragment, dreamt"), like *Spiegel*, belongs to the same world that gave us the sound masses of Xenakis's *Metastasis* and the micropolyphony of Ligeti's *Atmosphères*, but heard from a distance, aesthetically and acoustically. In his programme note, Cerha discusses the perpetual problem – it's a composer thing – of musical ideas losing their fizz somewhere between their initial conception and the writing down, an issue he cannily builds into his piece, with tones fluctuating at the margins, that dream broken into by incongruous tonalities and disembodied chorales. Under Klangforum Wien and Sylvain Cambreling it all slips down like butterscotch.

But the string trio *Neun Bagatellen* (2008) and *Instants* for orchestra (2006-07) belong to a different world – a world perched between Webernesque complex simplicity, especially in the trio, and, in *Instants*, a brilliant, original, clean-cut complexity that's well worth schmoozing about. **Philip Clark**

Chopin · Saint-Saëns

Chopin Cello Sonata, Op 65. Introduction and Polonaise brillante, Op 3

Saint-Saëns Cello Sonata No 2, Op 123

Jamie Walton *vc* **Daniel Grimwood** *pf*

Signum Ⓕ SIGCD252 (72' • DDD)

Chopin – selected comparison:

Rostropovich, Argerich (2/81[R]) (DG) 419 860-2GGA

Chopin Sonata – selected comparisons:

Fournier, Fonda (4/72[R]) (DG) 477 5939GOM6

Maisky, Argerich (2/02) (DG) 471 346-2GH

Gerhardt, Osborne (11/08) (HYPE) CDA67624

Saint-Saëns – selected comparison:

Isserlis, Devoyon (10/00) (RCA) 09026 63518-2

Unfailingly musical performances that just lack the last ounce of colour



Saint-Saëns's Second Cello Sonata is an extraordinary combination of Baroque rhetoric and high Romanticism, written, not without struggle, in 1905. Formally and musically, he thwarts our expectations at every turn, be it in the edgily rhetorical *Maestoso*, *largamente* or the *scherzo*-with-variations second movement. At its heart lies Bach (the very opening has the air of an updated Solo Cello Suite before yielding to a theme of the kind of limpid simplicity that only JSB could create). Jamie Walton is alive to the twists and turns of Saint-Saëns's imagination and brings to the sonata a warm, rich sound that is initially very persuasive, ably supported by Daniel Grimwood, who surmounts the considerable challenges of the piano-writing with ease and musicality. But there is more to be wrung from this piece in terms of colour, as Steven Isserlis and Pascal Devoyon so compellingly demonstrate in their RCA reading.

For success in Chopin's Cello Sonata you need not only a first-rate cellist but, perhaps even more crucially, a pianist utterly at one with his idiom. The mazurka-infused *Scherzo* is a good litmus test, demanding that the pianist switches from the forthright to the ethereal while negotiating handfuls of notes at speed. So while Pierre Fournier is compelling in his own right, his pianist Jean Fonda is too backwardly miked and not quite dextrous enough. Grimwood is an altogether more convincing foil for Walton; but then you turn to Argerich with Rostropovich and all comparisons are blown out of the water. Her version with Maisky, on the other hand, pushes things too far, losing sight of Chopin's innate classicism in the process. That balance is better achieved in the Gerhardt/Osborne reading and indeed on this new recording. But again it's colour that seems in slightly short supply here, with Walton relying perhaps too much on the inherently beautiful

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sound he makes, which sometimes softens the effect of some of Chopin's more startling harmonic twists. And in the delightfully frothy Introduction and Polonaise, though Walton and Grimwood are unfailingly musical, they don't electrify in the manner of Rostropovich and Argerich.

Harriet Smith

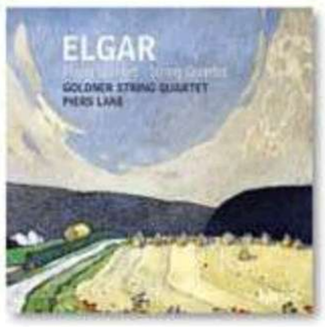
Elgar

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Piano Quintet, Op 84[ab]. String Quartet, Op 83[b]. Mina[a]. Laura Valse[a]. March in D[a]. Impromptu[a]
[a]**Piers Lane** *pf* [b]**Goldner Quartet** (Dene Olding, Dimity Hall *vns* Irina Morozova *va* Julian Smiles *vc*)

Hyperion Ⓕ CDA67857 (78' • DDD)

Accolades all round for this generous programme from Lane and the Goldners



No beating about the bush: the Goldners give the most sublimely articulate and raptly communicative reading of Elgar's elusive String Quartet that it's been my privilege to encounter. It's not just their fabulous technical address and scrupulous adherence to the text that are so impressive (all achieved, I should add, without a whiff of self-conscious display), but the recreative ardour, tumbling fantasy and sinewy strength they bring to this marvellous score make it seem as though the ink is barely dry on the manuscript, as well as making you appreciate afresh the supreme mastery of the composer's part-writing. Certainly, it's hard to conceive the fragrant *Piacevole* centrepiece enjoying more pliable or wistfully poetic treatment than here.

The performance of the epic Piano Quintet evinces a comparable generosity of spirit, very real sense of teamwork and flawless discipline. Piers Lane's own earlier account with the youthful Vellinger Quartet (CfP, 9/95[R]) remains a notable achievement but this thrillingly dedicated new version conveys even more of the music's far-flung ambition, subtle motivic interplay, arresting drama and spooky undertow (Elgar's imagination had been sparked by a colourful local myth that a clump of dead trees near his West Sussex cottage were the twisted forms of Spanish monks struck by lightning while engaging in pagan rites).

Sandwiched between the two main offerings come four piano miniatures, the haunting, dream-like waltz *Mina* from 1932-33 (named after Elgar's pet Cairn Terrier) being the pick of the bunch. Ben Connellan's Potton Hall sound and balance are beyond reproach; Diana McVeagh contributes a scholarly and highly illuminating booklet essay. This is, quite simply, a superlative CD.

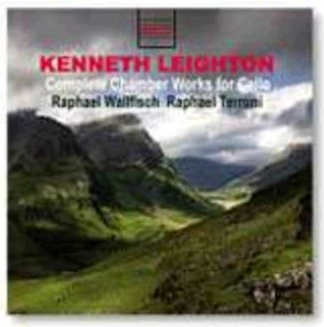
Andrew Achenbach

Leighton

'Complete Chamber Works for Cello'
Alleluia Pascha Nostrum, Op 85[a]. Elegy, Op 5[a]. Partita, Op 35[a]. Sonata for Solo Cello, Op 52
Raphael Wallfisch *vc* [a]**Raphael Terroni** *pf*

British Music Society Ⓕ BMS439CD (61' • DDD)

Music of staying power and tugging emotion, championed by two Raphaels



The programme spans more than three decades, the earliest item being the Elegy, Op 5, from 1949. It's a seven-minute essay whose songful countenance owes not a little to Vaughan Williams and Finzi, and which originally comprised the slow movement of a Cello Sonata that Leighton wrote in his final year as an Oxford undergraduate. Completed in 1959, the Partita is cast in three movements, its opening, imploringly expressive Elegy leading to a biting *Scherzo* and prodigally inventive Theme and Variations. This is music of impeccable craft and genuine substance, always sure of its goal and shot through with Leighton's own pungent brand of lyricism.

Likewise the meaty and rewarding Sonata for solo cello that Leighton wrote for Joan Dickson in the summer of 1967 amply repays close scrutiny, its enviably concentrated and exhilaratingly resourceful finale ("Flourish, Chaconne and Coda") ultimately returning to the elegiac mood (and material) of the work's introduction. Last, but certainly not least, is *Alleluia Pascha Nostrum*, written in August 1981 and subtitled "Meditation on plainsong melodies from the 12th-century Salisbury Chant for Easter Day". This piece crams a wealth of deeply personal inspiration, taut argument and passionate fervour into its 13-minute span.

Suffice it to report, Wallfisch and Terroni are superbly persuasive exponents, the performance of *Alleluia Pascha Nostrum* in every way a match for dedicatee Wallfisch's own blistering world premiere recording with his father, Peter, on Chandos (5/93). Truthfully engineered by Paul Arden-Taylor and lucidly annotated by Adam Binks, this valuable BMS anthology merits the heartiest of plaudits.

Andrew Achenbach

Rautavaara

'Summer Thoughts'
Lost Landscapes. Summer Thoughts. April Lines. Notturno e danza. Variétude. Dithyrambos. Pelimannit (The Fiddlers)
Pekka Kuusisto *vn* **Paavali Jumppanen** *pf*

Ondine Ⓕ ODE1177-2 (71' • DDD)

The Fiddlers – comparative version: Tateno (ONDI) ODE710-2

A fascinating collection casting light on Finland's most eminent living composer



Rautavaara's music for violin and piano occupies a byway in his output, with no really outstanding work like a sonata. His fluency in writing for solo violin is demonstrated by three competition test pieces: *Dithyrambos* (1970), *Variétude* for solo violin (1974, later arranged for guitar) – both for the International Sibelius Competitions – and *Notturno e danza* (1993) for Espoo's Juvenalia Music Institute. Musically satisfying as each is, Rautavaara thought enough of the *Notturno* to base a movement in his *Angel of Light* Symphony on it the following year.

Lost Landscapes (2005) is Rautavaara's largest violin-and-piano duo by far, a wistful evocation of four places where he had studied in the mid-1950s: Tanglewood, Ascona, Vienna and New York, although the volatile "Wall Street" finale does finally break the prevailingly nostalgic mood. The brief *Summer Thoughts* (2008, but a reworking of an earlier piece) restores the calm but is too insubstantial for a successful title-track. *April Lines* is more turbulent, reflecting its chequered history.

Kuusisto and Jumppanen are persuasive executants – Rautavaara's challenging technical demands are thrown off with élan – but the violin's often edgy intonation does not sit well with the dreamier inspirations, with *Lost Landscapes* suffering especially in this respect. Where the performers are at their best is in *The Fiddlers*, Rautavaara's vivacious folk-music piano suite (1952), delivered in lively and fully competitive fashion by Jumppanen (rivalling his eminent stablemate Izumi Tateno), and prefaced here by Kuusisto playing unaccompanied the folk tunes on which it was based, in Samuel Rinta-Nikkola's sparkling original notations. Top-notch sound.

Guy Rickards

Ysaÿe

String Quintet[a]. String Quartet, 'London' (arr J Ysaÿe). Andante. Paganini Variations (arr J Ysaÿe)[a]
Kryptos Quartet (Hanna Drzewiecka, Elisabeth Wybou *vns* Vincent Hepp *va* Anthony Gröger *vc*) with [a]**Vlad Bogdanas** *va*

Et'cetera Ⓕ KTC4034 (58' • DDD)

Some all-but-forgotten chamber music proves a rare treat for Ysaÿe lovers



Ysaÿe's own music was all but engulfed by his performing career and the only composition of note that has held the repertoire is his much recorded set of

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Six Sonatas for solo violin, which are regarded by many as the only viable successor to the unaccompanied works by Bach. But there is much more yet to be discovered and all the music on this disc has a magnetically haunting appeal, not least the meditative and delicate Andante in B minor for string quintet (1893), full of intense melancholy but becoming more passionately assertive at its central climax and resolving ethereally in D major. The String Quintet in B minor (1894) is inscribed to "mon frère Théophile" (the composer's younger brother). It is the longest work here (20 minutes) but in a single movement more restless and animated than its companions, sometimes passionate but with a moving expressive kernel of nostalgia.

The String Quartet began life as a "Trio de Londres" but was turned into its present format by the composer's grandson, Jacques. It opens with something of the touchingly refined lyricism of the other works but then surprises the listener by introducing a complete and satisfyingly structured fugue, and has a positive conclusion. It was also Jacques who found the *Paganini* Variations (originally for solo violin) among his grandfather's unpublished works and arranged them with great effect for string quartet. They are also intimate and winningly contrasted between lyricism and virtuosity (impressively realised here) to make a neat finale to a concert of music full of individuality and character.

The performances are immaculate in both execution and ensemble, and very sensitive in their feeling for the composer's elusive but memorable muse. The recording is truthful and beautifully balanced in an ideally intimate acoustic. This will prove a real find for lovers of French chamber music, notably of Ravel and Debussy.

Ivan March

Zemlinsky

Cello Sonata[a]. Maiblumen blühten überall[b]. Two Pieces[c]. Three Pieces[a]

[b]**Lucie Hájková** *sop* [bc]**Zemlinsky Quartet** (František Souček, Petr Střížek *vns* Petr Holman *va* [a]Vladimír Fortin *vc*) with [bc]**Josef Klusoň** *va* [b]**Michal Kaňka** *vc* [a]**Jaromír Klepáč** *pf*

Praga Digitals Ⓕ PRD/DSD250 284 (61' • DDD/DSD)

Vc Son, Three Pieces – selected comparison: Müller, Hinterhuber (NAXO) 8 570540

Chamber music by a young Viennese composer in Brahms's shadow



The figure of Brahms loomed large over late-19th-century Austro-German composers, nowhere more so than in the field of chamber music. Alexander Zemlinsky was only 25 when the great man died, yet already he'd made enough of an impression for the older composer to recommend his Clarinet Trio to his own publisher, Simrock.

It's perhaps not surprising that much of the music on this new Praga disc has a Brahmsian flavour to it. Sometimes this seems to act as a launch pad for Zemlinsky's imagination, such as in the Two Pieces for string quintet (a texture Brahms had made his own), a soaring first piece followed by a glinting *scherzo*. But elsewhere, particularly in the substantial Cello Sonata, the influence can seem burdensome. Yet, as ever, perception is vastly affected by interpretation, particularly when the music is not of the first rank. On this new reading, cellist Michal Kaňka takes a broader tempo for the opening movement that weighs the music down and merely emphasises its lack of an individual voice. Othmar Müller on Naxos is faster-flowing, to good effect, and also benefits from more characterful piano-playing in the finale from Christopher Hinterhuber. In the slow movement, though, it is the new performance that is more persuasive, avoiding the temptation to over-emote. The characterful Three Pieces for cello and piano, composed when Zemlinsky was barely out of his teens, are a more compelling proposition, with the composer packing much into their brief span.

To open the disc, a fascinating torso: Zemlinsky's unfinished setting of a poem by Richard Dehmel for soprano and string sextet. Here is a whiff of the mature composer in the vividness with which he reacts to the tragic text and the luminosity of the string-writing. The performances are more than serviceable without being visionary. But the booklet-notes are a model of erudition.

Harriet Smith

'Capricho Latino'

Albéniz Asturias (Leyenda) (arr Pine) **Anon** Balada Espagñola (Romance) (arr Florido) **Cordero** Rapsodia Panameña **Espéjo** Prélude Ibérique (á Henryk Szeryng) **González** Epitalamio Tanguero **Piazzólla** Tango Etude No 3 Con Libertango (arr Pine) **Quiroga** Emigrantes Celtas. Terra!! Á Nosa!! **Ridout** Ferdinand the Bullaa **Rodrigo** Capriccio (Offrande à Sarasate) **Serebrier** Aires de Tango **Tarrega** Recuerdos de la Alhambra (arr Ricci) **White** Study No 6 (A Secundino Arango) **Ysaÿe** Sonata in E major (á Manuel Quiroga), Op 27

Rachel Barton Pine *vn* [a]**Héctor Elizondo** *narr*

Çedille Ⓕ CDR 90000 124 (78' • DDD)

An absorbing programme of Iberiana played with skill on a single fiddle



This is Rachel Barton Pine's 12th CD recording for Çedille and while it may lack a single large-scale, weighty piece (the longest single item is José Serebrier's *Aires de Tango*, written specially for her, at a touch over eight minutes), it does contain a wealth of engaging music superbly delivered. There are familiar items, albeit in less-well-known guises, such as Albéniz's *Asturias* in a finger-blistering transcription by Pine herself (which almost convinces that this is how Albéniz may have first "heard" the music) or Tarrega's *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* in a fine arrangement by Ruggiero Ricci.

For many, a major delight will be in encountering previously unknown repertoire (there are eight premieres here), such as Roque Cordero's serious-minded *Rapsodia Panameña*, Rodrigo's *Capriccio* or the pair of idiomatically composed works by Manuel Quiroga who was the dedicatee of Ysaÿe's single-span Sixth unaccompanied Sonata from Op 27– perhaps the most concentrated item here and which is written in the form of a habañera. There are fun items too, not least in the final track, Alan Ridout's 1971 *Ferdinand the Bull*, delightfully rendered by Pine and Héctor Elizondo.

Pine's gift as arranger are also showcased in her rendition of Piazzólla's third *Etude con Libertango*, right from the opening bar. She catches its Latin swing to a nicety and her playing throughout is nothing less than idiomatic. Some pieces here inhabit that shadowy world where the tune but not the provenance is known, such as Jesus Florido's arrangement of the *Romance* or *Balada Espagñola*, Espéjo's *Prélude Ibérique* and José White's Study No 6 (*A Secundino Arango*). To all Pine brings the same virtuosity and delight in communication. Splendid sound, too, in a close but resonant recording.

Guy Rickards

'Destination Paris'

Enescu Aubade **Françaix** String Trio **Martinů** String Trios – No 1, H136; No 2, H238

Lendvai String Trio (Nadia Wijzenbeek *vn* Ylvali Zilliacus *va* Marie Macleod *vc*)

Stone Records Ⓕ 500192 780079 (56' • DDD)

String trios by three young men who went west during Paris's golden age



This mixed group of works for string trio were all written when the composers were living in Paris during that period in the 1920s and '30s when it was the centre of the music world. The first of the two Martinů trios (1923) was the very first work the Czech composer wrote on his arrival there. Amazingly, after the initial performances the score was lost: it was discovered in the Danish National Library as recently as 2005.

It opens strikingly with hints of neoclassicism, using playful *pizzicatos* leading finally to a gentle close. The central slow

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movement is intense in its lyricism, leading to a ripe climax, here helped by the close recording. The violin then reaches stratospheric heights, leading into the jaunty finale, again with prominent *pizzicatos* and passages that come close to the Slavonic writing of Smetana in *The Bartered Bride*. One has to thank the Lendvai players for resurrecting the piece, to make the perfect coupling for the Second Trio of 1934.

Unlike the First, this consists simply of two substantial movements in sonata form, with the opening confidently aggressive in its spikiness and a lyrical second subject. During the central development section the violin weaves a sort of cadenza over a sustained chord, before relaxing into a final section in triple time. The second movement opens with a cello melody, followed by one on the viola in echo, before leading into the main *Allegro* in neat sonata form.

Françaix's Trio (1933) is quite different in tone, with its four very brief movements in pure neo-classical style, with the second a waltz-like *scherzo* with witty *pizzicatos* and the slow movement easily songful, before the jaunty finale with jolly oompah rhythms in the opening section and a slow middle section involving "smoochy" ideas.

Enescu's *Aubade* dates from much earlier, in 1899, a simple, attractive piece exploiting dotted rhythms in 6/8 time. The Lendvai players deserve credit for this excellent disc, though what a pity that so little information is given on these London-trained players, let alone an explanation of their unusual name.

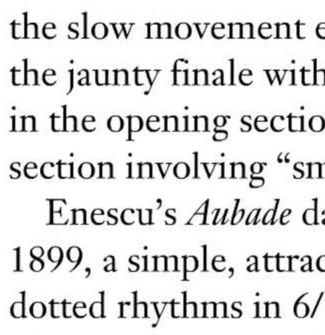
Edward Greenfield

'Distant Still'

Gudmundsen-Holmgreen Near Still Distant Still **Ruders** Horn Trio **Eichberg** Horn Trio **Danish Horn Trio** (Jakob Keiding *hn* Christina Åstrand *vn* Per Salo *pf*)

Dacapo Ⓕ 8 226549 (62' • DDD)

New music for horn trio that needs fear no comparison with past great works



Of the three works here for the horn trio combination made classic by the masterpieces of Brahms and Ligeti (recorded some 10 years ago by the wonderful Danish Horn Trio – Chandos, 9/02), none appears overawed by the possible comparisons. Taken together, they offer a fascinating cross-section of the diversity of temperament among Danish composers.

Pride of place goes to the best-known figure of Poul Ruders. His Horn Trio dares to shadow the classic four-movement design, starting with a lengthy phase of rarefied Webernesque linearity, before a Bartókian *perpetuum mobile* and a horn solo with microtonal bendings (coloured by freely vibrating piano strings)



Trio Dali: three young players with plenty to say

Joyous DISCOVERY

Schubert Trios from an ensemble to watch

Schubert

Piano Trios – No 1, D898; No 2, D929. Arpeggione Sonata, D821[a]. Fantasie, D934[b]

Trio Dali (Amandine Savary *pf* [b]Vineta Sareika *vn* [a]Christian-Pierre La Marca *vc*)

Fuga Libera Ⓑ ② FUG584 (136' • DDD)

Trios – selected comparisons:

Beaux Arts Trio (5/86[R]) (PHIL) 475 7571POR2

R & G Capuçon, Braley (6/07) (VIRG) 365476-2

D929 – selected comparisons:

Florestan Trio (11/02) (HYPE) CDA67347

Vienna Pf Trio (MDG) MDG342 1166-2

D898 – selected comparison:

Florestan Trio (3/02) (HYPE) CDA67273



I have to confess I hadn't previously encountered the Trio Dali. My loss: this new set of Schubert's piano trios is a real discovery from three young players with plenty to say and the most compelling manner of saying it.

Set alongside the Vienna Piano Trio's somewhat staid account of the E flat (D929), this new one has a joyous sense of energy from the off. The recording is beautifully balanced, with the piano never unduly forward in the texture and a particular delight is the way the players meld Schubert's countermelodies so sensitively. The way the Dali bring out the shy counterpoint at the reprise of the opening idea of the second movement (taken at an aptly flowing tempo here, *à la* Florestans and Capuçon/Braley trio) is just one instance among many. Their pacing is impressive too, not just here but in the B flat Trio (D898) as well: though there's much engagement with the minutiae of the music, it's never at the expense of a clear-headed view of the whole.

The B flat Trio is no less compelling, with plenty of air to the *Scherzo* – and almost as much visceral brilliance as Capuçon/Braley – and delicately nuanced string-playing that charms without ever losing purpose. Their perky rondo finale has a sense of playfulness sometimes missing from more traditional views of the work, the masterly Beaux Arts included.

The group's name, incidentally, derives not from the surrealist painter Salvador Dalí but from Dali in south-west China, a city famed for its intricate marble carvings, the players being inspired by this thoughtful and unhurried creative process. It bodes well for their longevity.

We also get delicious performances of the Arpeggione Sonata and the C major Fantasie. If further persuasion were needed that this is a set that should live on your shelves, these provide it. I'm off to sample their previous Ravel disc now.

Harriet Smith

PHOTOGRAPHY: JULIEN MIGNOT

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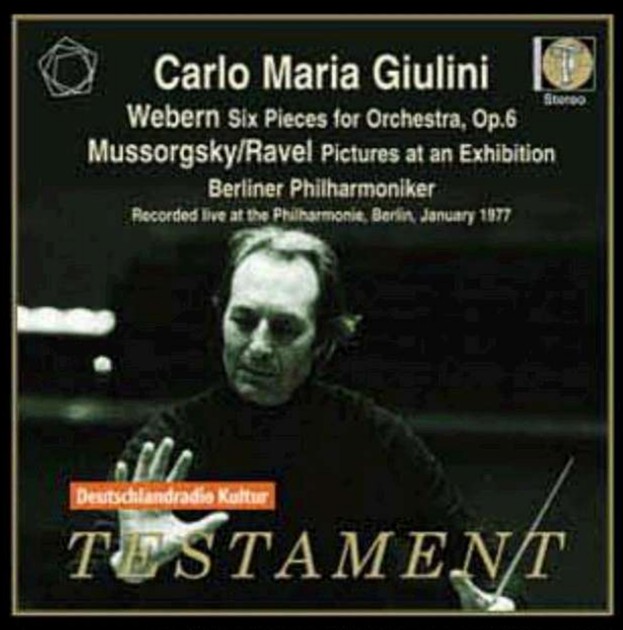


CARLO MARIA GIULINI
Haydn:
Symphony No.94 *Surprise*
MAHLER: Symphony No.1
Berliner Philharmoniker
Recorded live in stereo at the
Philharmonie, Berlin,
February/March 1976
Previously unpublished
SBT2 1462
(2CDs at a reduced price)

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CARLO MARIA GIULINI
Schubert:
Symphonies Nos.8 & 9
Berliner Philharmoniker
Recorded live in stereo at the
Philharmonie, Berlin, January 1977
Previously unpublished
SBT 1463



CARLO MARIA GIULINI
Webern:
Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op.6
Mussorgsky/Ravel:
Pictures at an Exhibition
Berliner Philharmoniker
Recorded live in stereo at the
Philharmonie, Berlin, January 1977
Previously unpublished
SBT 1464



CARLO MARIA GIULINI
Mahler:
Das Lied von der Erde
Brigitte Fassbaender
Francisco Araiza
Berliner Philharmoniker
Recorded live in stereo at the
Philharmonie, Berlin,
February 1984
Previously unpublished
SBT 1465

WILHELM FURTWÄNGLER
Bruckner:
Symphony No.5
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original mastertape
Berliner Philharmoniker
Recorded live in at the
(Alte) Philharmonie, Berlin,
October 1942
Previously unpublished
SBT 1466



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provide polarised contrasts that the finale then juggles and re-balances.

To those familiar with Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's work, the pared-down abstraction of *Near Still Distant Still* will come as no surprise. Here is music that derives maximum effect from minimal means in a non-glamorous yet fascinating dialect of minimalism. More orientated towards conventional performative virtuosity and audience expectation is the Horn Trio of Søren Nils Eichberg, a new figure to me. From moment to moment this is highly engaging music in a polystylistic Messiaen-to-MacMillan way. On the broader level it satisfies less than the other two pieces, precisely because it seems unable to resist the urge to please.

It is a talented piece nevertheless, and worth its place on a disc that is as finely recorded as it is played.

David Fanning

Escher · Pijper · de Leeuw · Voormolen

Escher Violin Sonata **de Leeuw** Sonatina. Improvisation on the Dutch Christmas Carol 'Midden in de winternacht' **Pijper** Violin Sonatas – No 1; No 2. Solo Violin Sonata **Voormolen** Pastorale

Philippe Graffin *vn* **Jelger Blanken** *pf*

Onyx Ⓕ ONYX4080 (79' • DDD)

Dutch violin sonatas from the last century that audibly look to France



Philippe Graffin here champions four 20th-century Dutch composers, forging a Dutch-French entente that is audible in some of the music as well.

The composer who most obviously fell under the spell of Debussy is Willem Pijper (1894-1947), whose two sonatas for violin and piano, from 1919 and 1922 respectively, inhabit a world that is not far removed from French Impressionism. By the time he came to write his Sonata for unaccompanied violin in 1931, however, his stance seems to have shifted towards something more avant-garde, more harmonically discursive, and in terms of instrumental technique echoing a tradition enshrined in the solo sonatas (1924) of Eugène Ysaÿe. Pijper's Sonata was espoused by the great Hungarian violinist Zoltán Székely, who gave the first performances in Amsterdam during concerts staged by the International Society for Contemporary Music in 1932.

Rudolf Escher (1912-80), in the finale of his 1950 Sonata, seems to be looking over his shoulder to the music of Ravel, while the other two movements attest to powerful, more personal impressions left by the Second World War, the opening *Allegro* being cast in a mood of dark, angular intensity, the central *Largo* forming a brooding lament. A *Pastorale* by Alexander Voormolen (1895-1980), originally for oboe, again looks to early-20th-century French music, as perhaps refracted through Delius, and a 1955 Sonatina by Ton de Leeuw (1926-96) wraps a strange, rarefied central section in music of propulsive high spirits. First-rate, spry and sensitive playing makes Graffin's and Blanken's advocacy persuasive.

Geoffrey Norris

Alda Dizdari

Bartók Sonata for Solo Violin, Sz117 – Fuga **Brahms** Hungarian Dances, WoO1 (arr Joachim) – No 1; No 17; No 19; No 21 **Enescu** Violin Sonata No 3, 'dans le caractère populaire roumain', Op 25 **Janáček** Violin Sonata **Pärt** Spiegel im Spiegel **Stravinsky** Pastorale

Alda Dizdari *vn* **Tom Blach** *pf*

Mellos Ⓕ MELLOS080311 (69' • DDD)

Recorded live at Wigmore Hall, London, July 2010

One to Watch in May – and now with a triumphant Wigmore recital on disc



The Albanian violinist Alda Dizdari, has been featured as *Gramophone*'s "One to Watch" (5/11) and this disc, taken from a Wigmore Hall recital, confirms a remarkable talent.

Unlike many live recordings, it's clearly the record of a single performance; there are a few minor accidents (piano fluffs, fleetingly imperfect intonation), some audience members with annoying coughs, and I wondered whether the Bartók fugue had been part of a complete performance of the Solo Sonata. More to the point, it's obvious that Dizdari and Blach are giving their all and not considering possible retakes. The Janáček is truly passionate, rougher than Repin and Lugansky's recent studio recording (DG, 3/11), but this music, I think, actually benefits from moving beyond purely beautiful sounds (Janáček seems to agree, writing *feroce* at the start of the finale).

When not aiming at ferocity, Dizdari's tone is notably rich and expressive – especially in the Pärt, played with a very modest degree of slowish vibrato. The *Hungarian Dances* are given with great panache but the highlight of the programme, for me, is the Enescu. In a work that depends so much on performing style, and with such detailed instructions, Dizdari and Blach seem to get both the spirit and the letter just right. I felt sure they must have listened to Enescu's recording with Dinu Lipatti. The opening of the second movement is perhaps not mysterious enough – Dizdari cuts short the rests between her phrases – but the Wigmore audience's cheers at the end show how powerfully communicative the performance has been.

Duncan Druce

'The Peasant Girl'

Barley Yura **Bartók** 44 Duos – selection, with improvisations **Bratsch** Er Nemo Klantz[a]. Bi Lovengo[a] **DuOud** For Nedim (For Nadia)[a] **F Hermann** Dark Eyes[a] **Kodály** Duo, Op 7 **J Lewis/Bratsch** Django[a] **N'Dour** Life **Zawinul** The Peasant[a]. The Pursuit of the Woman with the Feathered Hat[a] ([a]arr Barley)

Viktoria Mullova *vn* **Matthew Barley Ensemble** (Matthew Barley *vc* Julian Joseph *pf* Paul Clarvis, Sam Walton *perc*)

Onyx Ⓜ ② ONYX4070 (91' • DDD)

Mullova's musical journey, following a path where classical and jazz styles meet



It's not easy to describe this album, a strange musical journey that takes us from North Africa to Hungary by way of the Modern Jazz Quartet and Russian Gypsy music. The gypsies provide something of a connecting motif but perhaps it's better just to sit back and enjoy the brilliant, imaginative playing, with its interesting dialogue between the performance styles of jazz and classical music.

Lively pieces like *For Nedim* and *The Pursuit of the Woman with the Feathered Hat* go with a tremendous swing. More reflective tracks such as *The Peasant Girl* are not, perhaps, quite as convincing, though Barley's own *Yura* gives off a powerfully melancholic aura. Many tracks involve improvisation – Julian Joseph's piano-playing is outstanding – and I'd love to know whether Mullova, too, is improvising. She certainly sounds spontaneous but retains a disciplined polish from her classical training. Sometimes the stylistic mixture can be disconcerting. A sequence of Bartók duos interleaved with Gypsy tunes is cleverly managed, but the conventional café-music harmonies sit very strangely alongside Bartók's subtle evocations of rural idioms. The other Bartók sequence is more convincing, with short solo improvisations from Joseph, Clarvis and Walton creating a connecting narrative. However, the duos themselves lose something when played on violin and cello; the *Mosquito Dance*, for instance, sounds more menacing with two like instruments buzzing around one another.

The Kodály, of course, is wonderfully conceived for violin and cello, and Mullova and Barley give a fine performance, with some truly beautiful quiet passages, plenty of energy and passion, and an attractively light, playful style in the finale. I did long in places for the grander, more rhetorical manner adopted by Kennedy and Harrell (EMI, 5/00), but all in all this is a very stimulating programme, performed with flair and finesse.

Duncan Druce

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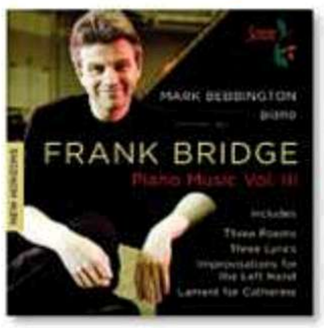
Instrumental

Hough's first-rate Chopin • Mesmerising Grosvenor • Sor's late guitar works revealed

Bridge

'Piano Music, Vol 3'
A Dedication. Arabesque. Berceuse. Canzonetta. Gargoyle. Hidden Fires. Miniature Pastorals, Set 3. Three Improvisations. Three Lyrics. Three Pieces. Three Poems. Winter Pastoral
Mark Bebbington *pf*
Somm Ⓜ SOMMCD0107 (76' • DDD)

Mark Bebbington continues his survey of Frank Bridge's works for piano



Much as I admire Mark Bebbington's artistry and his sterling championship of (largely forgotten) British piano music from the last century, and much as I enjoy reading Lewis Foreman's highly informed writing on the subject, neither can persuade me that all the works in this collection are ones that the world has been yearning to hear. There is something doggedly determined about such a title as "Piano Music, Vol 3" that says "good, bad or indifferent, you're going to get everything", and Bridge's piano music is not consistently interesting enough to merit more than a ruthlessly cherry-picked selection.
His later style of austere Scriabinesque chromaticism is a further bar to its general appeal. Foreman's claim that the Three Lyrics (1921-24) and their "more demanding harmonic language" are "aimed at the popular domestic market" must be a moot point.

Best of all are the early works: Berceuse (1901), Bridge's first piano miniature, and Three Pieces (1901-02), have an immediate appeal to which Bebbington appends affection and the same lustrous tone-colouring common to all 22 separate titles (the closely monitored Steinway recorded by Siva Oke and Paul Arden-Taylor is amazingly lifelike). *Hidden Fires*, too, from 1927 is an impressive if brief (2'43") toccata that would make a snappy encore. Those with a penchant for the piano's left-hand-alone repertoire will be drawn to Three Improvisations, written for the talented young pianist and organist Douglas Fox (1893-1978), who had lost his right arm in Flanders – one of Bridge's many responses to the conflict that affected much of his future thinking.

Jeremy Nicholas

Britten

Solo Cello Suites – No 1, Op 72; No 2, Op 80; No 3, Op 87
Daniel Müller-Schott *vc*
Orfeo Ⓕ C835 111A (71' • DDD)

Müller-Schott's approach to Britten's Cello Suites is influenced by the works' dedicatee



As always, the shadow of Mstislav Rostropovich looms large here. Daniel Müller-Schott was fortunate enough to work on Britten's three Cello Suites during a year he spent studying with Rostropovich, the pieces' dedicatee, and reminisces in the booklet about how the Russian master approached the music with "all his typical vitality".

His own performances have vitality, too, but are otherwise quite different. What sets Rostropovich apart, aside from his huge and lustrous cello tone, is the outright authority of his playing. Comparisons between teacher and pupil in the first two Suites (Rostropovich did not record the third for Decca) reveal Rostropovich keeping a firm, unfussy grip on rhythm, and a sense of the longer-term structure of each piece, that make the music seem inevitable. Müller-Schott's flexible playing feels almost wayward by comparison.

In fact, that only means he falls into line with recordings by most other cellists of his generation, such as Truls Mørk, Pieter Wispelwey and (to a lesser extent) Robert Cohen. All are liberal in their use of rubato and allow themselves a freedom of expression barely hinted at in Britten's scores.

In the *Andante lento* of Suite No 2, Müller-Schott's yearning tone hardly qualifies for Britten's *non espress* marking, affecting though it is; and in the following *Ciaccona* he lives for the moment with a virtuoso range of colours and accents. This level of engagement is thoroughly absorbing on its own terms, especially in the Third Suite, the freest in its flowing lyrical beauty.

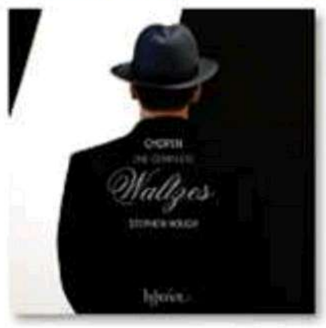
For their consistently high technical standards and imagination, Müller-Schott's performances are as recommendable as any among recent recordings.

Richard Fairman

Chopin

Complete Waltzes
Stephen Hough *pf*
Hyperion Ⓕ CDA67849 (60' • DDD)

Hough charms and beguiles in this considered reading of Chopin's Waltzes



Not all major pianists play Chopin but many who do have expressed a good deal of themselves through the Waltzes. They reveal a lot about a player and are merciless, it has been said, in showing up the limitations of an interpreter's personality, and not just in the rhythm department. Brilliance and allure are required, of course, and so are reflective, interior qualities. The many repeated sections in the Waltzes can derail even cultivated pianists, who may keep your attention for a while but who then become predictable. Once predictability sets in, you tend to feel there is no hope.

Chopin would have had a fit at the thought of us listening to his eight published Waltzes together on the trot, or the unpublished ones which follow them here. Once engaged with Stephen Hough, though, you will stick with him, I feel sure, and with increasing pleasure: less is not more but not enough, and a cumulative quality begins to build that one is reluctant to break. My admiration for him as an artist increases, too, as one senses how responsive he is to Chopin's variety, in a corpus of music not generally recognised as being so various. The demand for a special kind of virtuosity, directed towards the natural exuberance of the dance, he meets here to perfection, and he meets another challenge which the merely accomplished virtuoso may not even be aware of: to use sound to command precise musical character.

In making sequences of my own through the tracks, I've been delighted by the rediscoveries I've made, and also by new pleasures found among the slighter, less complex waltzes that Chopin allowed to circulate but did not publish. The nine securely authenticated pieces immediately follow the published ones here, a further three of more doubtful provenance being added after that. As compositions, the nine may not be as sophisticated as the concert

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waltzes, but are no less characteristic of him, and Hough shows they repay treatment as detailed and thoughtful as the rest require. In many other versions they do not get it, however, the moderately paced pieces being played too slowly and infected with a generalised wistfulness or, worse still, languor. Another of Hough's strengths is to be found in the shape and direction he gives all the Waltzes, and in the freshness of his tone of voice. He can charm and beguile, and be bold in his contrasts, but he gets on with it, and it is the music he gives us, with true sentiments, and not merely a take on received ideas.

And what a lovely sound he makes – on a Yamaha, excellently recorded in a concert-hall acoustic. In textural terms he is up to the minute with current thinking, accepting that the interpreter should make choices among the variants existing for some of these pieces, in the same spirit as Chopin created them. More freshness, again. The recital is rounded off with the most waltz-like of the Nocturnes, the E flat major, Op 9 No 2 – a nice touch.

Stephen Plaistow

Chopin

Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise brillante, Op 22. Ballade No 4, Op 52. Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58. Polonaise-fantaisie, Op 61

Ingolf Wunder *pf*

DG Ⓕ 477 9634GH (68' • DDD)

DG's latest signing – a pianist who inhabits Chopin from the inside



In wishing Martha Argerich a happy 70th birthday on a recent blog, Stephen Hough, referring to a film clip of the 1965 Chopin Competition winner, wondered how the 24-year-old pianist "could play with such poise and elegance without a trace of an unpleasant, freakish precocity – just expressive, natural, beautiful piano-playing". Argerich, of course, was on the jury for the 2010 Competition, and Hough's characterisation of her playing applies exactly to the joint second-place prize-winner of the event, the 26-year-old Austrian Ingolf Wunder. He also won the concerto prize and another for the (compulsory) Polonaise-fantaisie, a problematic work given an outstanding performance here, and which rivals Hough's recent benchmark performance (Hyperion, 5/10). Many people thought Wunder should have won. DG thought so, too, and signed him in January.

He is not concerned to impress with dazzling fingers, extreme dynamics or idiosyncratic gestures. His tempi are not fast (try the Sonata's *Scherzo* and *Presto*) but certainly give the impression of speed. He is a stroker, not a hitter, an artist who inhabits Chopin's world from the inside and produces a consistently lovely sound. The final chords of the Sonata's first movement, instead of striking a triumphant conclusion, are voiced in a way that tells you there is much more of this story yet to come, a small moment but indicative of the way Wunder puts Chopin before himself. If the *Presto* could be more exuberant (Percy Grainger is tremendous here – APR, 4/11), the textual clarity of this and the final pages of the Ballade (so often scrambled) is exemplary, while the Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise round off this impressive debut recital in rousing fashion.

Jeremy Nicholas

Chopin · Liszt · Ravel

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Chopin Four Scherzos. Nocturnes – No 5, Op 15 No 2; No 19, Op 72 No 1; No 20 in C sharp minor, Op *posth* **Chopin/Liszt** Six Chants polonais, S480 – No 1, Mädchens Wuunsch; No 5, Meine Freuden **Liszt** En rêve, S207 **Ravel** Gaspard de la nuit

Benjamin Grosvenor *pf*

Decca Ⓕ 478 3206DH (75' • DDD)

An 'official' debut confirms this much talked-about pianist's awesome talent



Benjamin Grosvenor is not only the first British pianist to be signed by Decca since the days of Clifford Curzon, Peter Katin and Moura Lympany, but also the youngest British artist ever to be signed to the label. Just as significantly, this acknowledgement has not come on the back of a major competition. Frankly, Grosvenor is too interesting and too individual to win any of them. His discs of minor Chopin (EMI, 3/10), his highly praised unofficial debut ("This and That", 4/10), live recordings circulated privately over the past few years and this new one are evidence of an awesome talent, a pianist with fantastic natural reflexes in the Cziffra class and, more excitingly, a musician with purpose and imagination, whose playing transcends the sterile confines of the studio.

Having said that, I think he misjudges the first of the Four Scherzos (he orders them 1, 4, 3 and 2). It clocks in at 8'08", compared with Rubinstein's fast 8'20" (his 1932 recording), a tempo that reduces the first subject to the verge of incoherence. After this undeniably exciting reading, Grosvenor inserts a single Nocturne as a counterweight between each Scherzo. Good programming. (Louis Lortie did this on his recent excellent Chopin recital for Chandos; his B minor Scherzo, incidentally, lasts 9'26".) I have never heard the filigree runs in the Nocturnes and two *Chants polonais* delivered with such innate improvisatory nonchalance, or a second part of the B flat minor Scherzo that can match Grosvenor's delicious insouciance. This is music-making with a smile on its face.

Crowning it all is a masterly *Gaspard* in which an astonishing array of touch and tonal colouring are brought to bear in Grosvenor's vivid, distinctly defined characterisation of all three movements. In brief, I am delighted that this prodigiously gifted young musician is on his way, on the right label and launched at last on what will surely be an important international career.

Jeremy Nicholas

Liszt

Lento placido, S172 No 3. Hungarian Rhapsody, S244 No 15, 'Rákóczy' (arr Horowitz). Liebesträume, S541 – No 2; No 3. La danza, S424 No 9. Tannhäuser (Wagner) – O du mein holder Abendster, S444. Tristan und Isolde (Wagner) – Liebestod, S447. Valse impromptu, S213. Venezia e Napoli, S162

Tristan Pfaff *pf*

Aparte Ⓕ AP019 (59' • DDD)

Liszt

Adelaïde (Beethoven), S466. Ballade No 2, S171. Hexaméron, S392. Polonaise, S223 No 1. Prelude and Fugue after Bach (BWV545), S462 No 2. Soirées de Vienne, S427 – No 9. Valse impromptu, S213

Joseph Moog *pf*

Claves Ⓕ 50 1108 (67' • DDD)

Liszt's invitations to dazzle are accepted with a mix of dash, swagger and taste





Anyone who opens an all-Liszt recital with the 15th Rhapsody in Horowitz's pulverising transcription is not only cheeky by definition but also risks immediate comparison with the master. As it happens, Tristan Pfaff reserves the most power and projection for the climactic scales but doesn't match Volodos's lightness and nuanced humour, let alone Horowitz's demonic intensity.

Perhaps less boxy sound would have imparted a more fluid, singing quality to the second and third *Liebesträume*, third *Consolation* and the two Wagner transcriptions, yet these precise qualities result from Pfaff's sensitive pedalling and refined *legato* touch in the "Gondoliera". The remaining *Venezia e Napoli* pieces fare less well: Pfaff's left-hand tremolos are overly loud and undifferentiated in the "Canzone", while his square phrasing and workaday repeated notes in the "Tarantella" yield to more three-dimensional virtuoso treatments from pianists as different as

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Marc-André Hamelin and Mûza Rubackyté. By contrast, Pfaff throws caution to the wind with fingers scintillatingly intact throughout the Rossini-based "La danza" and he tosses off nicely lilting filigree in the *Valse impromptu*.

However, the latter benefits from a brisker, better recorded and more individually characterised reading among six other superb Liszt interpretations encompassing Joseph Moog's Liszt programme. It opens with the jointly composed *Hexaméron*, based on the march from *I puritani*, whose highlights include the most supple and fleet traversal of Herz's fluffy note-spinning contribution I've ever heard.

In the seldom-played C minor Polonaise, Moog shaves two-and-a-half minutes from Stephen Hough's 12-plus minute mark, sharpening the dance rhythms with gruffer swagger and dashing through the central section's less inspired pages. While the B minor Ballade's introspective passages have plenty of breathing room, the virtuoso outbursts arguably set new speed records, and without the slightest trace of banging.

The same holds true for the Beethoven/Liszt *Adelaïde*'s fatigue-inducing repeated chords, although Moog's finger *legato* and controlled rubato most memorably take wing in the unabashedly garish *Trauerwalzer* Variations after Schubert. Moog closes this highly recommended programme with a Bach/Liszt C major Prelude and Fugue, BWV545, whose powerful and sonorous impact evokes more than merely a Baroque organ at full throttle.

Jed Distler

Mompou

'Piano Music, Vol 6'

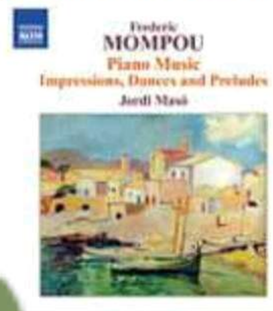
El plany del captaire. Les fàbriques prop de la platja. Record de platja. Barri de platja. Camins de sorra. Five Impressions. L'ermita de La Garriga. Pastoral en la boira. Pastoral salvatge. Camí de muntanya. Les amigues retornen del camp. El camí del jardi. Montseny. L'eco. Impressions de muntaya. Pensament. Two Little Preludes. Prelude (1913). Two Arabesques. Estanys de paper de plata. Dansa dels tres reis que han caigut del camell. Cançó i dansa del pessebre. Les hores. Ball pla

Jordi Masó *pf*

Naxos Ⓢ 8 572142 (66' • DDD)

Recorded 1988-97

Recently rediscovered miniatures point towards the mature Mompou



This invaluable disc rounds off Jordi Masó's cycle of Mompou's piano music with previously undiscovered pieces. Invaluable not only for scholars who will note the beginnings and first thoughts of later mature offerings such as *Suburbis* and *Impresiones intimas* but most of all for lovers of a composer who proved that "it is working with limits that mastery reveals itself" (Goethe) and, as a corollary, "what is most great is always most minute" (Blake). Wilfred Mellers, in his superb study *Le jardin retrouvé*, called Mompou "a minor muse" and for Masó, who offers complete works rather than fragments, you will hear the genesis of much that followed.

All these works, with their charming and ofton idiosyncratic titles ("pastoral in the fog", "the girls come back from the country", "tinfoil pools", "dance of the three kings who have fallen off their camels") alternate occasional bursts of gaiety with more frequent moods of nostalgia and introspection. The influences of Poulenc (more potent than Satie) and Debussy are paramount (*Tinfoil Pools – Estanys de paper de plata* – is remarkably close to Debussy's Prélude "La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune") and there are memories, too, of Mompou's beloved Chopin.

All this music is finely recorded and played with special devotion by Jordi Masó, who also provides a superbly informed essay.

Bryce Morrison

Prokofiev

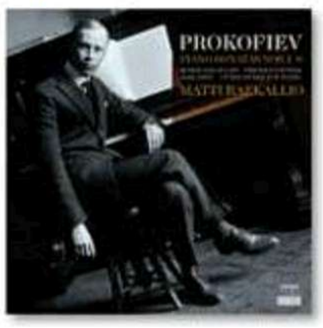
Complete Piano Sonatas. Etudes, Op 2. Toccata, Op 11. Sarcasms, Op 17. Visions fugitives, Op 22. Tales of an Old Grandmother, Op 31. Romeo and Juliet – Ten Pieces, Op 75

Matti Raekallio *pf*

Ondine Ⓑ ④ ODE1103-2Q (4h 24' • DDD)

Recorded 1988-97

Virtuosity and resolve in a reissued cycle of Prokofiev's nine piano sonatas



This four-CD set of Prokofiev's nine piano sonatas also includes several fist-shaking gestures for his early anti-Romanticism, complemented by other more amiable offerings. Formidably played and well recorded, it will alert even the most seasoned listener to the conflicting elements of Prokofiev's always "difficult", prickly and volatile nature. The First Sonata's Romantic rhetoric may well have made the composer blush as he moved on in his Second Sonata to find his truest voice, his wintry lyricism, scrubbing-brush bravura and, in the finale, his Tom and Jerry cartoon caperings. Again, the journey from such aplomb to the "War" Sonatas (Nos 6, 7 and 8; for Richter, always among their most celebrated interpreters, music representing "a world without reason or equilibrium") is immense.

Finnish pianist Matti Raekallio, who I first heard in America many years ago, plays with a shot-from-guns virtuosity that carries all



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before it. Hear him in the Fourth Sonata's central *Andante assai*, music where only a small, barely visible flower grows, or in his blistering attack on the finales of the Seventh and Eighth Sonatas, and you will be more than suitably awed and chilled. His steely resolve softens in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, but returns with a vengeance in the Toccata and early Etudes.

True, there is intense recorded competition for most of these works – for example, Argerich in the Toccata (DG) and Richter heard live in Sonatas Nos 2 and 8, taken from his first 1961 Festival Hall recital (BBC Legends, 3/09) – to take two key examples, but Matti Raekallio's album still makes for compulsive listening, achieving a keen sense of "works of art that are full of glittering razor-blades" (Picasso).

Bryce Morrison

Saint-Saëns

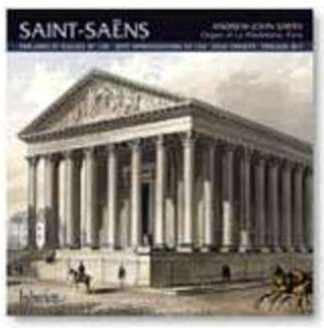
Trois Préludes et Fugues, Op 109. Prélude in F. Sept Improvisations, Op 150. Deux Versets

Andrew-John Smith *org*

Hyperion Ⓕ CDA67815 (76' • DDD)

Played on the organ of La Madeleine, Paris

Marvellous music played on Saint-Saëns's own Paris organ



O lucky Saint-Saëns! Lucky three times over! First, fortunate to have presided over Cavaillé-Coll's magnificent organ in La Madeleine (as Lefébure-Wély's successor) for 20 years from 1857; second, blessed with friends and pupils who revered him and inspired his improvisations; and third, surely grateful now to have in Andrew-John Smith an advocate who understands just how to lift from the printed page and project this remarkably rigorous yet beguiling music. The combination of this artist playing this music in such an authentic setting proves to be unbeatable.

Spanning more than 60 years of composition, from the F major Prélude to the magical and dazzling Op 150 Improvisations of 1917 (composed in bed while recovering from bronchitis), Smith has marshalled a disparate selection of pieces into a generous programme that is a constant delight. We can only marvel at the economy and apparent simplicity – largely eschewing verbose rhetoric – with which Saint-Saëns writes for the king of instruments. There are several deeply satisfying surprises: for example, the remarkably forward-looking Improvisation on "Pro defunctis", which outdoes Vierne; and the sinewy chromaticism of the Improvisation in E flat, which is more akin to a *hommage à Reger*.

Liszt was quite correct in claiming Saint-Saëns as the (then) greatest living organist. This music deserves the widest currency and I look forward to any future volumes and delights such as the *Rhapsodies on Breton Carols*. This disc is a magnificent achievement: the recorded sound is engrossing and is devoid of any hint of the Parisian traffic soundtrack.

Malcolm Riley

Sor

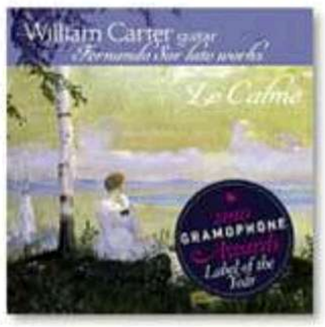
'Late Works'

Etudes, Op 29 – No 13; No 17; No 23. Etudes, Op 35 – No 17; No 22. Etude, Op 60 No 22. Morceau de concert, Op 54. Lecons, Op 31 – No 16; No 23. Mazurka, Op 43 No 4. Waltz, Op 32 No 2. Le calme, Op 50

William Carter *gtr*

Linn Ⓕ CKD380 (60' • DDD/DSD)

A revelatory exploration that eschews fashionable modern guitar techniques



Whether in a solo or continuo context, lutenist and guitarist William Carter always combines an improvisational exuberance with an intense inwardness that is even more pronounced on this disc devoted to the late solo guitar works of the Spanish guitarist and composer Fernando Sor (1778-1839). Carter's previous Sor disc explored the composer's earlier works using a guitar by luthier Tony Johnson, modelled on 19th-century examples; it was also, to the best of Carter's knowledge, the first disc of Sor's music to be recorded using only the flesh of the fingertips, in line with Sor's own preferences, and not using the nails, as is usual with modern players.

The present performances, which use the same instrument and means of tone production, are no less revelatory. Indeed, one has the impression that one is hearing Sor's true voice, in autumnal raiment, for the first time, the sublime economy and nascent romanticism of the writing growing in significance thanks to the delicate colours afforded by this guitar's lighter construction and Carter's willingness to flesh out, as it were, Sor's most intimate thoughts by moving centripetally rather than centrifugally.

Thus Carter causes the more artistically modest studies, such as Op 60 No 22, to shimmer with delicate orchestral hues, while filling those that recall Schumann (Op 35 No 17) or Mendelssohn (the wistful Op 31 No 23 *Mouvement de prière religieuse*) with as much mellow fruitfulness as he does the wonderful *Morceau de concert*, Op 54 and the caprice *Le calme*, Op 50, which he likens to a "sustained lyric meditation".

My disc of the year so far.

William Yeoman

Stanford

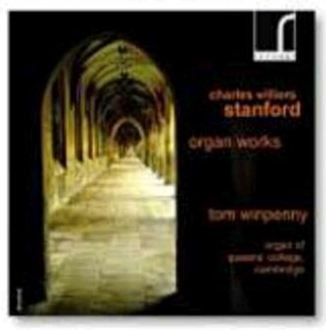
Fantasia and Toccata, Op 57. Canzone, Op 116 No 2. Prelude and Fugue in E minor (1874). Prelude (in Form of a Chaconne), Op 88 No 2. Intermezzo founded upon an Irish Air, Op 189 No 4. Epithalamium, Op 182 No 5. Three Preludes and Fugues, Op 193. By the Seashore, Op 194 No 1. In Modo Dorico, Op 132 No 1. Postlude, Op 105 No 6

Tom Winpenny *org*

Resonus Ⓜ RES10104 (72' • DDD)

Played on the James J Binns organ of Queens' College, Cambridge

An imaginative Stanford selection, winningly played on a fine organ



The crisp and rhythmic playing of Tom Winpenny, coupled with a colourful use of the unspoilt Victorian Binns organ (1892) at Queens' College, Cambridge, brings these performances of Stanford's organ works to life. The Fantasia and Toccata in D minor, Op 57, and the Postlude in D minor, Op 105 No 6, often feature in organ recitals today, but how often have they suffered from dreary registration and tempi that drag? Winpenny's interpretations are refreshingly vital and compelling.

His imaginative and carefully devised programme also reminds us that Stanford's organ works repertoire began early with the Bachian Prelude and Fugue in E minor (1874), in reality a student work but one that, like much other early Stanford, shows many indications of the flair that would rapidly emerge in the late 1870s.

It is good to hear the somewhat neglected *Prelude in Form of a Chaconne*, Op 88 No 2, a dark, brooding neo-Baroque creation full of inventive harmony, and *In Modo Dorico*, Op 132 No 1, which Stanford transcribed from his piece for piano (and which found its way into his last opera *The Travelling Companion*), a powerful, austere example of Stanford's consummate assimilation of modality. Both versions have their merits – the piano version has more poetry but the modal idiom chimes with the sustained tones of the organ.

One of the most attractive features of this recording, along with its generous booklet and informative notes, must be the inclusion of later works such as the Canzona, Op 116 No 2, the sprightly but rarely heard Epithalamium, Op 182 No 5, and the concert piece *By the Seashore*, Op 194 No 1, all of which, as premiere recordings, make this disc particularly rewarding listening.

Jeremy Dibble

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ROUND-UP

Piano Classics

Bryce Morrison surveys a new label's first crop

Early May saw the launch in London's Steinway Hall of Piano Classics, the inspiration of Pieter van Winkel and Jeremy Elliott. And the label's first crop of 10 discs by artists as legendary as Claudio Arrau and relative newcomers such as Roberto Poli bears eloquent witness to the enterprise, particularly in these recession-hit, belt-tightening times. Invited to review a selection from what promises to be an invaluable series, I have given pride of place to some rare live and historic recordings by **Claudio Arrau**. These date from 1970-81 and, more remarkably, from 1937-43 where not even the primitive sound can dim the impact of playing of a unique vision and virtuosity.

Many years ago, Emanuel Ax asked me whether I had heard an early recording of Arrau playing Liszt's *Spanish Rhapsody* which he claimed "makes us young ones sound positively arthritic". I recalled this comment as I listened to the present issue featuring playing light years away from Arrau's later, arguably more strenuous style (for Joan Chissell, my late and much missed colleague, an illustration of how "ripeness is all"). Here, tempi are invariably fast and furious allied to a rhetorical grandeur that has few equals. In *Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este* there is a touching emphasis on Liszt's religious symbolism and it is only in the B minor and *Dante* Sonatas that Arrau's blistering bravura becomes relentless and over-intense. Even so, the strength and resilience are awe-inspiring. Overall, here is evidence of one of the greatest pianists of the century, who once declared "When I play I am in a state of ecstasy – that is what I live for". This issue is a vital contribution to the Liszt bicentenary.

Then, at another pole of achievement, there is **Bruno-Leonardo Gelber**'s Brahms and a reminder of a pianist who, scorning studio conditions, played everything to the hilt and threw all caution to the winds. If Arrau, particularly in his later years, emphasised rich bass-line sonorities, Gelber plays very much from the top, his glittering sonority underlined in brilliantly lit sound. The opening of the F minor Sonata may be more *agitato* than *maestoso*, his impulsiveness in the two slow movements less dreaming and inward than from, say, Radu Lupu, yet he makes Clara Schumann's exclamation on first hearing Brahms – "the young eagle has spread his wings" – entirely understandable. Less generally, the contrast between the finale's magisterial utterance and its troll-like caperings is vividly caught and the *presto* sprint to the exultant coda will make even the most blasé Brahmsian catch his breath. In the *Handel* Variations there are, again, wonders of nimbleness, nothing of the studio and everything of a live and electrifying experience.

Variety is the spice of musical life and if **Nikolai Lugansky** gives us Rachmaninov with a cooling agent, his elegance and perspective throw a subtle light on miniatures such as *Lilacs* and the Tchaikovsky-Rachmaninov *Lullaby*. His *Scherzo* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is less mischievously coloured and inflected than that by Moiseiwitsch (always high on many pianists' desert island disc list) though his pace and dexterity are never less than enviable. Again, in the Second Sonata, played here in the 1931 revision, you will hear playing the reverse of Van Cliburn's sumptuously grand and legendary Moscow performance. For Lugansky, such an emotional vortex needs an element of distance and paradoxically he is less indelibly Russian than Cliburn.

For Ligeti, **Evgeni Koroliov**'s performance of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* was an ultimate achievement: "Forsaken and dying of thirst, I would listen to it up to my last breath." Certainly Koroliov's recording has an unswerving authority. Everything is formidably in its place. With few exceptions, repeats are not an opportunity for varying the colour, the light and shade but rather a reaffirmation of all that has gone before. A far cry from Gould's mercurial genius, this performance is audacious in its uncompromising refusal of all external pleading.

Finally, Volume 1 of what promises to be a complete Chopin cycle from **Roberto Poli**. All the performances on his first issue are the fruit of deep affection and consideration, whether in fragments (he recreates something very special in the Cantabile in B flat) or late masterpieces such as the Barcarolle. He makes a fine case for the Mazurkas' intimate nature as well as for their pround nationalist fervour, and in two of the richest of the Nocturnes, one pauses to wonder at the ultimately unknowable nature of Chopin's genius. All these performances are of a personal eloquence that makes me look forward to the continuation of a daunting undertaking that is, in Poli's own words, "a labour of love". G



Claudio Arrau: fast and furious in Liszt











Liszt Pf Concs Nos 1 & 2. Pf Sons – Dante; B minor, etc **Arrau**
Piano Classics Ⓑ ② PCLD0015
Brahms Pf Son No 3. Handel Vars **Gelber**
Ⓜ PCLD0006
Rachmaninov Pf Son No 2. Moments musicaux. Corelli Vars **Lugansky**
Ⓜ PCLD0001
Bach Goldberg Vars **Koroliov**
Ⓜ PCLD0010
Chopin Preludes. Noctures. Mazurkas, etc **Poli**
Ⓜ PCLD0012

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Vocal

Mozart and Fauré Requiems • The Sixteen's Palestrina project • Emma Kirkby in Salzburg

JS Bach

Six Motets, BWV225-30

Maria Keohane, Dorothee Mields, Zsuzsi Tóth *sops* **Robin Blaze, Damien Guillon** *countertens* **Thomas Hobbs, Hans Jörg Mammel** *tens* **Peter Kooij, Stephan MacLeod** *basses* **Collegium Vocale Gent / Philippe Herreweghe**

PHI Ⓕ LPH002 (63' • DDD • T/t)

Selected comparison:

Herreweghe (12/86) (HARM) HMC90 1231

Staple Bach offered with a seasoned instinct but admittedly mixed results



With Collegium Vocale Gent appearing on a new label for the first time since moving from Virgin Classics to Harmonia Mundi in the late 1990s, what could better herald a fresh beginning for a seasoned vocal ensemble than Bach's motets? Herreweghe's last account dates from more than 25 years ago, when it was received as a template of refinement. But a generation is a long time in early music performance and this blend of new and experienced singers is transformational in its confident projection and distilled emotional responses.

How one paces the six motets over the hour is where Herreweghe earns his spurs; the order and balancing of the connected rhetorical worlds alongside the textural and the figural specificity of each work stacks up with an impressive and mature authority. If the opening double-chorus "concerto" that is the perennially fresh *Singet dem Herrn* falls short on both bloom and visceral energy, *Jesu, meine Freude* is redolent of the most involving and imbued Schutzian landscape for which Herreweghe is justly fêted. The web of five alternating voices creates an affecting narrative of disarming concentration. How memorably "the jaws of the death" are assuaged towards "serene certainty" through meticulous tempo and dynamic inflections.

The recorded sound allows for less air than some of the more generous and glamorous acoustics of Harmonia Mundi but the varied *colla parte* accompaniments are persuasively embedded, especially in the final two pieces (BWV226 and 228), where wind plays a significant part in restoring the recognisable homogeneity of Collegium Vocale's most successful Bach excursions over the years.

Herreweghe makes clear that "a groundbreaking reading is not necessary" and that, rather, he is embarked here on a "progress report". For expressive eloquence, top marks, but he is hampered at times by the sense of a "guest" ensemble short on the familiar bearings of a regular vocal outfit – even if this is relative. Inconsistent intonation, especially from the sopranos, leads to an unsettled *Komm, Jesu, komm*, and *Lobet den Herrn* doesn't really deliver what it promises.

Furchte dich nicht is, though, an ecstatic reading by any standards, Herreweghe drawing on the dark and softly articulated canvas of brass which sets up an insistent and illuminated cantus firmus on "Herr, mein Hirt". Vintage Herreweghe in parts, if not *in toto*.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Balfe

Ah! Would that I could love thee less. O smile as thou wert wont to smile. Dids't thou but know (Si tu savais). Hopeful heart should banish care. A home in the heart. Those we love. Old Friends. I'm a merry Zingara. Le crépuscule. A merry little Savoyard. Killarney. Falling River. Don't let the roses listen. The Blighted Flower. The green trees whispered. The Lonely Rose. I'd rather be a village maid. O take me to thy heart again

Sally Silver *sop* **Richard Bonynge** *pf*

Guild Ⓕ GMCD7359 (57' • DDD)

Charm is the order of the day in this selection of Balfe's ballads



The days are long gone when Victorian ballads could expect to arouse wide attention. Yet things have surely gone too far when such a prime example of the genre as Balfe's "Killarney" can be found only in vintage recordings by the likes of John McCormack. A warm welcome, then, for this new collection, which includes 17 other examples of Balfe's easy lyricism, none of which duplicates the contents of a 2008 collection of Balfe ballads issued by Victorian Opera.

The whole genre may not represent high art, of course, and what we have here includes such poetic efforts as Alfred Bunn's "O smile as thou wert wont to smile" (from the opera *The Daughter of St Mark*), which *Punch* lampooned mercilessly in the 1840s.

However, other numbers such as "I'm a merry Zingara" and "The Blighted Flower" were highly popular in their day and well deserve a hearing now. Sally Silver sounds a little twee in the opening "Ah! Would that I could love thee less" and elsewhere she might have benefited from a shade more expression. Far better that, though, than that the expression be exaggerated. Moreover, her charming soprano falls more comfortably on the ear than the voices on that Victorian Opera collection (though the latter is better documented). Charm is very much the order of the day here, and is displayed no less admirably in Richard Bonynge's devoted piano accompaniment. It's good news indeed to hear that there's a William Vincent Wallace collection to follow.

Andrew Lamb

Brahms · Hough

Brahms Liebeslieder, Op 52. Neue Liebeslieder, Op 65 **Hough** Other Love Songs

The Prince Consort (Anna Leese *sop* Jennifer Johnston *contr* Tim Mead *counterten* Andrew Staples *ten* Jacques Imbrailo *bar*) / **Alisdair Hogarth** *pf* with **Philip Fowke, Stephen Hough** *pfs*

Linn Ⓕ CKD382 (62' • DDD/DSD)

A Liebeslieder sandwich, with Stephen Hough's witty songs the delicious filling



For all Brahms's melodic and rhythmic inventiveness in his *Liebeslieder* waltzes, anyone who listens to the two sets straight through risks overdosing on triple-time Viennese *Gemütlichkeit*. Stephen Hough's cycle *Other Love Songs*, commissioned by The Prince Consort as a companion to the *Liebeslieder*, makes an ideal contrasting centrepiece.

Hough avowedly avoided poems about romantic heterosexual love to explore other kinds of love: filial love, gay love, divine love, love in defiance of racial prejudice. Drawing on poetic sources from St John's Gospel to AE Housman and Langston Hughes, the songs range eclectically from cabaret-style numbers to the Indian exoticism of "Kashmiri Song". The performers, including Hough himself as one of the pianists, do them proud. Soprano Anna Leese, bright and vibrant of tone, rises poignantly to the impassioned

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climax of "Kashmiri Song", while mezzo Jennifer Johnston, singing in broad Scouse, offers a delightful comic cameo as the feisty maid in "Madam and her Madam".

The *Liebeslieder* are enjoyable, too, with a splendid bite in the more vigorous numbers, although in their determination to avoid any hint of sentimentality the performers can be a touch prosaic, as in the serene hymn to the muses that closes the *Neue Liebeslieder*. The forward recording of the voices means that true soft singing, here and elsewhere, is at a premium. Still, if the rival versions by Barbara Bonney, Anne Sofie von Otter et al (EMI, 10/95) and a vocal quartet led by soprano Marlis Petersen (Harmonia Mundi, 11/07) are rather more beguilingly sung and shaped, with a subtler use of rubato, these fresh and direct performances have much to commend them. A clinching factor may well be the Hough songs, acerbically witty and deeply touching by turns, and culminating in the ethereal lullaby of "Simon, Son of John".

Richard Wigmore

Fauré

Requiem, Op 48 (1893 version)[a].
Cantique de Jean Racine, Op 11[b].
Tu es Petrus[c]. Tantum ergo, Op 65 No 2[b]
[a]Chiyuki Okamura *sop* **[a]David Wilson-Johnson, [c]Tomáš Selc** *bars* **[b]Paul Nancekievill** *org*
Schleswig-Holstein Festival Chorus, Lübeck; Ensemble Orchestral de Paris / Rolf Beck
Hänssler Classic Ⓕ CD98 628 (45' • DDD)
Recorded live at [a]Christkirche zu Rendsburg, July 15 & 16, 2010; [bc]Dom zu Meldorf, August 17, 2010

Requiem – selected comparisons:
Accentus, Orch Nat de Paris, Equilbey (8/09) (NAIV) V5173
Ens Vocal de Lausanne, Sinf Varsovia, Corboz (MIRA) MIR028

An intimate Fauré Requiem, along with attractive shorter works



Time was when you asked yourself just two questions before buying Fauré's Requiem: Is the performance any good? and What's the recording quality like? Now you need to ask a third: What edition does it use? For there are myriad different performing versions reflecting Fauré's own inability to stop tinkering with the work between its first performance in 1888 and the first performance of its final version in 1900. It was that final version, with an orchestration of symphonic proportions (allegedly created by Fauré's pupil, Roger-Ducasse), that ruled the roost for most of the 20th century, but during the 1980s various reconstructions of earlier versions began to appear in print and on disc. There are two basic ones to choose from, with full orchestra and with chamber-size orchestra, the latter of which is recorded here. Rolf Beck



Matthew White: 'unhooty bravado'

Canadian CALDARA

A Roman oratorio, tender and lusty

Caldara

La conversione di Clodoveo, re di Francia
Suzie Leblanc, Nathalie Paulin *sops* **Allyson McHardy** *mez* **Matthew White** *counterten*
La Nouvel Opéra / Alexander Weimann
ATMA Ⓕ ② ACD2 2505 (93' • DDD • T/t)



When the Vatican drastically curtailed public opera performances, the opera-mad Roman aristocracy consoled themselves with allegorical and/or moralising oratorios, in effect unstaged *opere serie*. Written in 1715 for the fabulously wealthy Prince Ruspoli (onetime patron of the young Handel), Antonio Caldara's *La conversione di Clodoveo* relates the legend of the Frankish King Clovis's conversion to Christianity, urged by his pious wife Clotilde, and clinched by an epiphany on the field of battle. If the work has its patches of Italianate routine, the succession of arias, leavened by three husband-wife duets, is rarely less than agreeable and sometimes rather more: in, say, the beguiling minuet aria in which Clotilde entreats Clovis to turn from Mars to the true God; or two solos for Bishop (and future Saint) Remigius, spiritual counsellor to Clotilde, the first a gently expressive *siciliano*, the second a vivid "storm" aria. Here and elsewhere Caldara's rhythms and slender, mainly homophonic textures anticipate the *galant* style that would gradually supersede the High Baroque.

The Canadian singers and instrumentalists do this attractive work proud. The playing of the period band – strings, occasionally complemented by recorder or oboe – is polished, rhythmically lively (the continuo never lapses into Baroque auto-chug) and sensitively shaped. Allyson McHardy's strong, finely focused mezzo is equally impressive in Clovis's bellicose extrovert arias and his luminous final invocation of divine love – which is one of the oratorio's highlights. Of the two nimble, graceful sopranos, Nathalie Paulin touchingly conveys Clotilde's tender concern for her husband; and countertenor Matthew White despatches the vigorous arias of the army captain Uberto with unhooty bravado, abetted by lusty orchestral playing.

The English translation of the libretto is stilted and error-strewn, however. But this should not deter Baroque lovers from investigating a thoroughly worthwhile piece from one of the most famous and prolific composers of his day.

Richard Wigmore

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adopts Fauré's 1893 version with bassoons, horns and trumpets added to the violin-less ensemble, and his reading is characterised by extreme restraint, greatly assisted by the softly comfortable acoustic of Rendsburg's Christkirche. Beck doesn't go for the simmering drama of Corboz or the sheer beauty of sound that makes Laurence Equilbey's recording so ravishingly lovely, although the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Chorus sopranos certainly present an ethereal front for a heart-warming "In Paradisum"; but this performance is both expansive (as in the *Introït*) and extremely intimate (as in a deliciously affectionate *Agnus Dei*), while the measured pace effectively sheds the brief "Dies irae" outburst of any menace. David Wilson-Johnson mingles majesty with gracefulness while Chiyuki Okamura produces a most enchanting performance of the "Pie Jesu".

Organist Paul Nancekievill is a model of discretion and subtlety in the Requiem, but enjoys his moment of glory in the *Cantique de Jean Racine* which is, perhaps, not in itself something to add great lustre to this disc. However, the presence of two small but rarely heard motets showing Fauré the church musician at his unpretentious best (the *Tantum ergo* is a different setting from that which Corboz includes) make this a very attractive disc indeed.

Marc Rochester

Ghersem

Ghershem Missa Ave virgo sanctissima **Anonymous** Regina coeli **Cornet** Regina coeli **Guerrero** Ave virgo sanctissima. Salve regina. Regina coeli **Philips** Salve regina. Regina coeli **Rogier** Regina coeli

Currende / Erik van Nevel

Accent Ⓕ ACC24235 (71' • DDD)

A composer who nearly vanished without trace is given his due



Géry de Ghersem (1573-1630) was one of several composers whose outputs were largely destroyed in a series of catastrophes in 18th-century Portugal. Out of hundreds of pieces, the work recorded here is the only complete one that remains. Based on Guerrero's famous setting of *Ave virgo sanctissima*, the seven-voice Mass reveals a composer of real fluency and ability, with a knack for the full, rich sonorities that increasingly preoccupied the composers working in the Spanish orbit at the turn of the 17th century. The characteristic turns of Guerrero's motet are everywhere recognisable but Ghersem adds extra voices to the scoring of his model. The work shows off Eric van Nevel's ensemble at its best: an organ is included and the resulting texture often had



James Swash and Jonty Ward: admirable soloists

Masculine MOZART

A 'unique' Requiem performed entirely by men and boys

Mozart

Requiem, K626

Jonty Ward *treb* **James Swash** *alto* **Guy Cutting** *ten* **Jonathan Howard** *bass* **Choir of New College, Oxford; Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment / Edward Higginbottom**

Novum Ⓕ NCR1383 (49 • DDD • T/t)



"This distinctive recording of Mozart's last great work can claim to be unique," announces a foreword to the booklet. Its USP, if you like, is the use not only of a choir of boys and men but of soloists drawn from the choir itself, rather than a row of operatic singers bussed (or jetted) in for the occasion. The two boy soloists acquit themselves admirably, with barely a hint of vulnerability in exposed moments such as the "Te decet hymnus" or the "Recordare", and combine well with the two men to create a more truthfully "ecclesiastical" sound than is often the case with starrier projects. The choir is full-throated and admirably secure.

The interpretation is straight down the line, the edition used the "traditional" Süssmayr completion. Tempi are apposite, the "Dies irae" and "Confutatis" held back a touch to allow all the voices to be heard in the busy textures. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment provide adequate accompaniment, the trombones shining especially in moments such as the "Confutatis" and the Offertory, although perhaps the tenor trombonist may have liked a retake of the solo that opens the "Tuba mirum". The church acoustic allows good separation of parts but, along with the softer-grained soloists, results in the slight loss of incisiveness of attack that naturally goes with such territory. This recording is valuable in itself as possibly the only one (as claimed – certainly one among very few) with boy and choral-scholar soloists. The four of them are deliberately named above, as Novum meanly omits them from the exterior of its otherwise comprehensive packaging.

David Threasher

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me thinking that there might be more instruments involved. Such a "trick of the light" may also be credited to Accent's sound recording: rarely in fact has Currende blossomed so fully on disc.

The disc rounds off with several settings of Marian antiphons by Ghersem's colleagues such as Philippe Rogier and Peter Philips (and more Guerrero). These make a less striking impression, partly because of Currende's tendency to downplay the music's dramatic potential, which other ensembles have been less shy to exploit. Saying that, there was little to set the pulse racing in Pieter Cornet's organ verses on the *Regina coeli* plainsong, which by the 10-minute mark had long outstayed its welcome as a palate-cleanser. Never mind; Ghersem's Mass may seldom be recorded again, so we should be grateful that it has been done so well.

Fabrice Fitch

Lassus

Deficiat in dolore vita mea. Iustorum animae. Magnificat Quant'in mille anni il ciel. Missa Amor ecco colei. Prophetiae Sibyllarum. Tristis est anima mea.

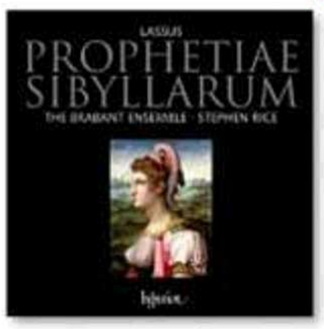
The Brabant Ensemble / Stephen Rice

Hyperion Ⓕ CDA67887 (74' • DDD)

Selected comparisons – Iustorum animae

Gardiner, Monteverdi Choir (02/07) (SDG) SDG701

Intelligence and restraint make a valuable Lassus portrait



This wide-ranging survey of Lassus's vast output opens with the work that made him famous, and then perhaps infamous, the 13 motet settings of some curious, semi-Christian, semi-pagan prophecies of an apocryphal Sibyl. What may shock us now is not the motets' youthful chromaticism (he wrote them around the age of 25, certainly before the move to the ducal court in Munich that sealed his career and his style) but their contradistinctively restrained underlay; in both cases one has caught the idea long before the end of the sequence. Then a punchy, alternatim *Magnificat*, one of a hundred such, and then three penitential motets in which the dissonance is so much more effectively and sparingly employed. A late Mass brings us to the summit of Lassus's achievement as a sacred contrapuntalist.

If the Brabant Ensemble's response seems subdued compared with their joyous exploration of the Chirk Castle partbooks, that may be due to the music's own restraint. They don't go all out for pathos in *Iustorum animae*, as the Monteverdi Choir do, but stay within the character of their clean, corporate sound, and the programme itself says much about the intelligence behind Stephen Rice's direction (as well as the booklet notes). For all the vaulted poetry of *Tristis est anima mea*, I feel he saves the best until last with the Mass's superb *Agnus dei*. I might hanker after a little less haze about the acoustic and more presence and definition to the voices as recorded, but such a cavil shouldn't obscure a warm recommendation.

Peter Quantrill

Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde (arr Schoenberg/Riehn)

Jane Irwin *mez* **Peter Wedd** *ten*

Manchester Camerata / Douglas Boyd

Avie Ⓕ AV2195 (61' • DDD T/t)

Recorded live at Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, January 2010

Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde (arr Schoenberg/Riehn)[a]. Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (arr Schoenberg)[b]

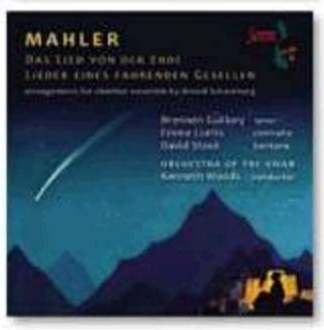
[a]**Emma Curtis** *contr* [a]**Brennen Guillory** *ten* [b]**David Stout** *bar* **Orchestra of the Swan / Kenneth Woods**

Somm Céleste Ⓕ SOMMCD0109 (79' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at Townsend Hall, Shipton-on-Stour, November 19, 2010

Two recordings of Schoenberg's scaled-down Song of the Earth





Arnold Schoenberg, trying to balance his love of Gustav Mahler with a notable lack of performance funding after the First World War, took to scaling down Mahler's orchestral song-cycles for smaller forces. After some success with *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, he then turned to the late composer's final masterpiece, *Das Lied von der Erde*, though his sketches lay incomplete until finished by conductor Rainer Riehn in the early 1980s.

These days, with orchestras facing similar financial constraints, Schoenberg's arrangements have been breaking free from chamber music festivals and finding their way into the symphonic mainstream. Competing recordings of *Das Lied* by two British orchestras, in fact, now coincide with this year's centennial both of Mahler's death and the piece's original premiere.

The pristine notion of Mahler conceiving *Das Lied* as a hybrid "song-symphony" took a small beating back in 1980 with the belated publication of the composer's autograph piano score, which treated the material more conventionally as a song-cycle. Schoenberg's arrangements split the difference, retaining much of Mahler's instrumental colour while leaving vocalists more room for recital-level nuance.

Appropriately enough, these two recordings (both recorded live in their concert venues) take quite opposite approaches, and both have much to recommend them instrumentally. Kenneth Woods leads the Orchestra of the Swan on a near-symphonic scale, thanks to the highly resonant acoustics of Townsend Hall, Shipston-on-Stour. Douglas Boyd makes each instrument of the Manchester Camerata count on its own terms, aided by the apparent sonic purity of Bridgewater Hall, Manchester.

Vocally, however, the results are less evenly matched. Under Woods, tenor Brennen Guillory and contralto Emma Curtis unleash rather full operatic firepower – a marginal benefit for Guillory's songs of exuberantly drunken scholars but a decided drawback for Curtis both in articulation and intonation. By contrast, tenor Peter Wedd and mezzo Jane Irwin fit the Manchester forces perfectly to scale, offering interpretative subtleties that would rarely make it past a full orchestra.

Last word, though, goes to the Orchestra of the Swan. In Schoenberg's less ambitious *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (not included on the Manchester recording), baritone David Stout's richly balanced performance easily stands out as the best thing on the disc.

Ken Smith

Mahler

Kindertotenlieder. Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen. Rückert-Lieder.

Katarina Karnéus *sop* **Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra / Susanna Mälkki**

BIS Ⓕ BIS-SACD-1600 (64' • DDD)

Selected comparisons – Rückert-Lieder

Karnéus, Vignoles (05/99) (EMI) 573168 2

Schäfer, Eschenbach (CAPR) CAP5026

Baker, Barbirolli (02/68) (EMI) 566981 2

A teasing and tormenting view of Mahler from both voice and instruments



These recordings were made between June 2007 (*Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*) and August 2010 (*Rückert-Lieder*) and I rather wish I could evaluate them over a similar period. Certainly they are not to be listened to all at once unless you seek an overpowering draught of *Weltschmerz*. The split threads of Mahler's orchestral nerve-ends are teased so thoroughly and with such interest by the orchestra and the BIS engineers that more than several listenings are required to assimilate them. Susanna Mälkki favours an Expressionist level of detail that casts louring shadows over even the blue flowers and green fields of the Wayfarer's first song. Mahler's great Puccini moment, at the end of "Um Mitternacht", is done with imposing authority if not absolute conviction: you can really hear those rippling

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piano scales à *La rondine*, where other interpreters hide them behind the brass or turn them over to the harps.

Sometimes Katarina Karnéus sings from within this *Erwartung*-like forest of notes, but her elegies carry more personal weight when they are voiced from the front. Her Mahler-voice has thickened and acquired more shades of lamentation since she sang the *Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen* at the 1995 Cardiff Singer of the World and recorded most of the *Rückert-Lieder* (with piano accompaniment) for EMI three years later: I think I prefer the earlier, sincere but dry-eyed farewell of "Ich bin den Welt abhanden gekommen" to this new adieu that's stretched with regret and almost impossibly freighted with grief.

Aside from a few pinched top notes – she chooses higher keys than Christa Ludwig, whose approach and timbre are otherwise comparable – Karnéus is a secure and heartfelt interpreter, but Janet Baker and Christine Schäfer – to alight upon a recent but outstanding example in the *Rückert-Lieder* – find a few more gentle notes in Mahler's bouquet of sorrow.

Peter Quantrill

Martinů

'Songs, Vol 1'

Six Simple Songs, H110. Three Lullabies, H146. Two Small Songs in Folk Idiom, H14. Two Songs on Russian Poetry, H135. Three Goethe Songs, H94. The Gnat's Wedding, H75. Three Children's Songs, H146. Dead Love, H44. Czech Riddles, H277. Two Songs, H31. Walk, I walk among the hills, H74*bis*. How dear to me the hour, H106. Blissfulness, H81. Tears, H41. Mood Drawing, H29. A Song of 1st November, H72. A Girl's Dreams, H22. When we are both old, H10. Before you know it, H6. Night after night in dreams I see you, H57. Three Songs on French Texts, H88. Life's over for me, H43. At Night, H30. Old Song, H74. Song on an Old Spanish Text, H87. A Song About Kissing, H27*bis*. I know a nice green grove, H273

Jana Wallingerová *mez* **Giorgio Koukl** *pf*

Naxos Ⓢ 8 572588 (79' • DDD)

A rewarding introduction to the (mainly) early songs of Martinů



Martinů's vocal music is well represented in the catalogue, notably by *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Greek Passion*, but his songs are unfamiliar and seldom included in live recitals.

Now comes a first-class and very generous collection of the earlier examples and a few later ones. As this disc is labelled Vol 1, presumably the rest are to follow. The only drawback is the absence of texts and translations, but I am anxious not to emphasise that lack, for when the songs are as beautifully and often movingly sung as they are here by Jana Wallingerová, and the piano accompaniments – a pleasure in themselves – are so felicitously and sensitively played by Giorgio Koukl, this CD affords much enjoyment. In any case, many of the songs are very short and so obviously encapsulate their titles, so one does not feel short-changed. The opening *Six Simple Songs* are each around a minute long and are immediately engaging; they are followed by *Three Lullabies*, of which the third, "Rocking and Swaying", is particularly delightful.

All the items that have Halbreich numbers H81 or lower (except H74) date from the composer's earlier years, from 1910 to 1912, and the pair of songs H31 are quite lovely. The touching "Tears", the lighter "A Girl's Dreams" and the nostalgic "When we are both old" readily communicate without translation. Among the later *Children's Songs*, H146, the evocation of "The Christmas Tree" is particularly memorable. But the most unpredictably original item here is the sprightly (1939) *Czech Riddles* (based on folk texts), which constantly changes mood and tempo, followed by "bird talk", echoed by the piano and climaxing with a harsh crow call! All in all, this is a most rewarding disc, throwing new light on its composer. It is very well recorded, too.

Ivan March

Palestrina

Missa Assumpta est Maria. Canticum canticorum – Tota pulchra es; Vulnerasti cor meum; Sicut lilium inter spinas. Ave Maria. Ave regina coelorum. Salve regina. Diffusa est gratia. Assumpta est Maria a 6 (Motet). Assumpta est Maria a 5 (Offertory)

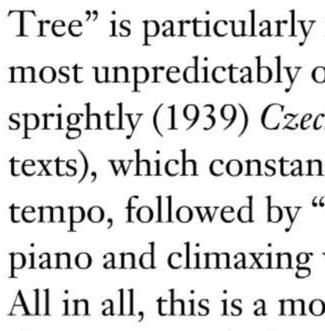
The Sixteen / Harry Christophers

Coro Ⓕ COR16091 (64' • DDD • T/t)

Selected comparisons – Mass

Clare College Choir, (EMI) 208120 2

A potentially monumental Palestrina project gets off to a promising start



The size of the Roman master's output is such that a disc entitled "Palestrina Volume 1" has one wondering just what Harry Christophers has taken on here. None the less, those who find Palestrina's reputation overdone would deny that he'd benefit from the systematic coverage that this opening salvo promises. With that in mind, I hope that The Sixteen won't simply confine themselves to the most famous works (such as the Mass recorded here, of which I remember a wonderfully atmospheric recording made at Ely Cathedral by the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, on EMI), which are by definition very well served, but also explore the considerable virgin territory left in the discography. The Italian group Delitiae Musicae began to do so in the mid-'90s but much remains to be done.

That hope is all the more sincerely expressed since the series does get off to a very fine start. The six-voice setting of *Assumpta est Maria* on which the Mass is based is very nicely handled, though the triple-time Alleluias feel a touch rushed. In the Mass I particularly appreciated the way in which the progression from slow to fast in the second part of the *Gloria* is terraced, rather than delivered in one (over)dose at "Quoniam tu solus", as was once ubiquitous, or in a continuous *accelerando*, as has become fashionable in recent Renaissance Mass recordings. The rest of the setting is equally well managed, the *Credo* nicely paced, and the programme as a whole very well judged.

This is Palestrina sung in the English manner but so well done that I suspect unprejudiced reviewers everywhere will give it a sympathetic hearing. The Sixteen are indeed on fine form. The only missed opportunity, I feel, concerns the three settings from the *Song of Songs*, which were probably intended for soloists and which might have been performed that way, if only for the sake of contrast. Christophers has a gift for taking his audience by the hand, and in that spirit it would be good to show off as many sides of Palestrina as possible.

Fabrice Fitch

Poulenc

'The Complete Songs, Vol 2'

Ce doux petit visage[b]. Les chemins de l'amour[a]. Hymne[f]. Nuage[c]. Paul et Virginie[e]. Deux Poèmes de Louis Aragon[b]. Trois Poèmes de Louise Lalanne[a]. Priez pour paix[d]. Tel jour, telle nuit[a]. Toréador[e]. Le travail du peintre[e]. Trois Chansons de Federico García Lorca[b]. Deux Poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire[d]. La tragique histoire du petit René[f]. Le petit garçon trop bien portant[b]

[a]**Felicity Lott,** [b]**Lorna Anderson,** [c]**Lisa Milne** *sops* [d]**Robert Murray** *ten* [e]**Christopher Maltman** *bar* [f]**Jonathan Lemalu** *bass-bar* **Malcolm Martineau** *pf*

Signum Ⓕ SIGCD263 (72' • DDD • T/t)

The second disc of this Poulenc project maintains the standard set in Vol 1



This is very much the mixture as before in the first of Signum's projected cycle of the complete Poulenc songs (8/11). The team of British singers accompanied by Malcolm Martineau is the same as before, the sopranos tending to outshine the male singers, though Felicity Lott in one or two of her contributions – as for example the Lafanne poems – is not in quite such fresh voice as before, even if the difference is marginal and her artistry and

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feeling for the French language remain as impressive as ever.

The selection starts robustly with Christopher Maltman singing the characterful "Toreador", described as *hispano-italienne*, though it is hard to fathom where the Italian element comes in this song about the bullfight. Lorna Anderson sings delightfully the three Lorca songs, very simple in their lyricism, and she it is who also sings "C", one of Poulenc's most popular songs, with its haunting arching phrases. Normally one expects this to be sung by a man but Anderson is at least as affecting. She is also characterful in the other Aragon song, "Fêtes galantes", with its chattering rhythms and witty pay-off.

"Hymne", sung by Jonathan Lemalu, is a simple setting of the Roman breviary as translated by Racine, and "Priez pour paix" reminds us that the composer remained in France during the Nazi occupation. Best of all perhaps are the two miniature cycles: first *Tel jour, telle nuit*, nine songs to words by Paul Eluard, beautifully sung by Felicity Lott. The other cycle, *Le travail du peintre*, fascinatingly gives us Poulenc's reaction to seven painters including Picasso, Braque, Miró, Chagall and Klee. Then, rounding the disc off, comes a light-hearted waltz song, "Les chemins de l'amour", with Felicity Lott demonstrating her mastery of French operetta style. Signum again provides excellent notes by Roger Nichols and full texts and translations.

Edward Greenfield

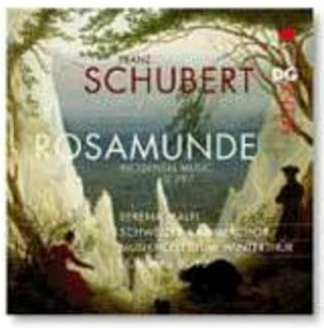
Schubert

Rosamunde, Fürstin von Zypern – incidental music, D797

Serena Malfi *contr* **Swiss Chamber Choir; Winterthur Musikkollegium Orchestra / Douglas Boyd**

Dabringhaus und Grimm Ⓕ MDG901 1633-6 (58' • DDD/DSD)

Schubert at his most charming in theatre music delivered with clarity and style



How ironic that Schubert's best-loved stage music should be associated with such an absurd farrago as Wilhelmina von Chézy's "grand romantic drama" *Rosamunde, Fürstin von Zypern*. Already ridiculed for her libretto to Weber's *Euryanthe*, Chézy was duly lambasted by the Viennese critics, though a complete fiasco was averted by Schubert's incidental music, with the choruses of huntsmen and shepherds attracting special praise. For later generations the outstanding number is the powerful B minor Entr'acte, which some scholars have posited as the "missing" finale of the *Unfinished* Symphony. With this sole exception, the *Rosamunde* music is Schubert at his most guilelessly charming, epitomising the *gemütlich*, quintessentially Viennese composer of popular myth.

Of the few available recordings to include all 10 numbers, Abbado and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe (DG) and Münchinger with the Vienna Philharmonic (Decca, 3/76[R]) stand out. Without necessarily displacing them, this new version has much in its favour. Douglas Boyd gets crisp and responsive playing from his Winterthur orchestra, founded on lean-toned strings, with violins properly divided left and right; and after a slightly dour opening to the overture (originally written for another play, *Die Zauberharfe*), he paces the music with a sure, light touch and a keen ear for balance. Rhythms – say in the huntsmen's chorus, where Münchinger is rather ponderous – are supple and buoyant, while first flute, oboe and especially clarinet frolic gracefully in their many bucolic solos. The fresh-toned Swiss Chamber Choir are at least a match for their rivals; and Serena Malfi brings a flavoursome, Latin timbre, if no special feeling for the words, to the wistful Romance. Abbado's Anne Sofie von Otter is ideal here. If his version has the edge in piquant detail, no one who buys this finely recorded new performance need feel short-changed.

Richard Wigmore

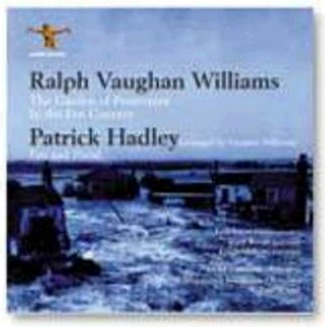
Hadley · Vaughan Williams

Hadley Fen and Flood[a] **Vaughan Williams** In the Fen Country. The Captain's Apprentice[b]. The Garden of Proserpine[c]

[a]**Mary Bevan** *sop* [c]**Jane Irwin** *mez* [ab]**Leigh Melrose** *bar* **Joyful Company of Singers; Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / Paul Daniel**

Albion Ⓕ ALBCD012 (60' • DDD • T)

More mouthwatering discoveries, played with great skill and dedication all round



Completed in 1899, *The Garden of Proserpine* was Vaughan Williams's first large-scale composition, a 24-minute setting for soprano, chorus and orchestra of Swinburne's (at the time daringly nihilistic) 1866 poem, which owes much to his RCM teachers Stanford and Parry. At the same time the work offers tantalising glimpses of glories to come: prospective purchasers should try from 17'42" ("We are not sure of sorrow") to the end, where the horns' soft repeated As (heard throughout the dusky introduction and later chanted impassively by unison chorus for the final stanza beginning at 20'35") lend a satisfying unity to the whole edifice. Paul Daniel obtains exemplary results from his combined forces and the sound is outstandingly realistic to match.

Vaughan Williams also had a hand in Patrick Hadley's *Fen and Flood*, written in the aftermath of the terrifying storm surge of January 31/February 1, 1953, that claimed 2400 victims in East Anglia, Holland and Belgium. A life-long resident of Heacham in north Norfolk, Hadley originally devised his cantata to include male chorus but was won over by VW's offer to rework the score for mixed voices, modestly stating that his close friend had "superimposed a magic that wasn't there before". A hugely likeable discovery it proves, too – compact, dramatic, tuneful and sincere – and delivered with splendid dash and obvious affection here. Dare we now hope for a recording of Hadley's *Connemara* (1958)?

Elsewhere, Daniel's perceptive *In the Fen Country* undoubtedly ranks up there alongside Boult's and Haitink's, and baritone Leigh Melrose's sensitive handling of VW's arrangement of the folksong "The Captain's Apprentice" (also heard in the Hadley) makes a touching postscript. Don't miss this fascinating release.

Andrew Achenbach

'Beyond All Mortal Dreams'

Clausen Tonight eternity alone **Ferko** O vis aeternitatis. Caritas abundant. O virtus sapientiae **Fissinger** Lux aeterna **Gjeilo** Sanctus. Phoenix **Hawley** Mosella. Te vigilans oculis **Paulus** The day is done. Pilgrim's Hymn. Hymn to the Eternal Flame **Stucky** O admirable commercium. O sacrum convivium. O vos omnes **Willan** How they so softly rest. Fair in face. I beheld her, beautiful as a dove. Rise up, my love, my fair one

Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge / Stephen Layton

Hyperion Ⓕ CDA67832 (68' • DDD • T)

Beautiful performances of atmospheric post-war American choral music



If this is a representative cross-section of unaccompanied American choral music since the Second World War, it shows a genre in which beauty of sound and an atmosphere of prayerfulness are the chief characteristics. With the exception of London-born Healy Willan, whose music here often sounds like animated Herbert Howells, these composers concentrate on little else, although few do it with such gorgeous results as New Yorker William Hawley. The intention seems to be to spend as much time as possible on a single chord, allowing choral voices to change around within it to create a luminous effect, and to project a voice – preferably an ethereally floating soprano (Margaret Walker does the job fantastically well in Edwin Fissinger's *Lux aeterna*) – above the rich chordal texture. Not so much minimalism as stasisism.

Steven Stucky gets a little excited at the start of his *O sacrum convivium* and it is here

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that we get our only real gesture towards something if not exactly atonal, then involving a certain tonal ambiguity. For my money the cleverest writing here comes from Frank Ferko who, through recourse to rows of bare fifths, nicely hints at the archaic source of his chosen texts (the 12th-century Hildegard of Bingen) before imperceptibly drawing our ear into the opulent sound world of his multi-part writing, and then taking it on an intriguing journey that spends more of its time in mid-20th-century France than anywhere else.

Stephen Layton performs miracles in sustaining these long musical phrases and superficially innocuous sounds, holding our attention even when the music might seem to be going nowhere. His delicate balancing of the choral textures, not to mention the sumptuous sounds he draws from the splendid Trinity College choir, elevates a disc of music which, in other hands, might come across as merely pleasant. Layton transforms it into something intensely lovely.

Marc Rochester

'Conversazione I'

Albinoni Senza il core del mio bene **Caldara** Clori, mia bella Clori **Handel** Mi, palpita il cor, HWV132*c*. Vedendo amor, HWV175. Toccata, HWV586. Capriccio, HWV483 **A Scarlatti** Clori vezzosa, e bella **D Scarlatti** Keyboard Sonatas – K9; K30; K430

Andrew Radley *counterten*

Sounds Baroque / Julian Perkins *hpd*

Avie Ⓕ AV2197 (76' • DDD • T/t)

Cantatas with an Italian connection, plus Handel and Scarlatti's keyboard duel



This disc presents music by five composers who were associated with the circle of the Venetian cardinal Pietro Ottoboni (1667-1740), who lavished vast sums of money on music, not least through his occasional hosting of the Sunday "conversazioni" which took place at the homes and gardens of various luminaries of the Arcadian Academy.

As far as I can tell, none of the music included can be securely pinned to the patronage of the music loving prelate; indeed, Handel's oft-recorded cantata *Mi, palpita il cor* was composed in London some years after the composer's time in Rome (as is clearly acknowledged in Avie's beautifully illustrated documentation). None the less, Sounds Baroque also perform cantatas by Ottoboni's Venetian compatriots Albinoni and Caldara, a cantata by Alessandro Scarlatti, solo harpsichord sonatas by his son Domenico and two short keyboard pieces by Handel – neither of them Italian in origin but still providing an informal evocation of the alleged keyboard duel between the two virtuosos that apparently happened at Ottoboni's residence, the Palazzo della Cancelleria.

Handel's *Vedendo amor* does have a clear Italian-period provenance; Andrew Radley demonstrates tender story-telling skills during the soft "Camminando lei pian piano". The majority of cantatas are accompanied elegantly by only a basso continuo trio but Caldara's *Clori, mia bella Clori* also has flute and oboe – an attractive mixture of timbres, even if I imagine that their parts may have been envisaged for two violins. In gentle arias Radley's singing has affectionate intimacy and delicacy (such as Caldara's lovely last aria, "Parto mio ben costante"). I look forward to Volume 2.

David Vickers

'Salzburg Barock'

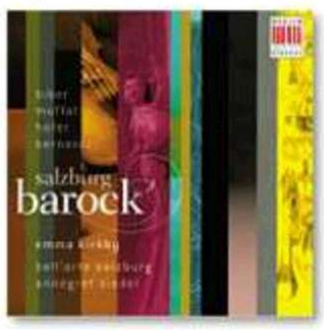
'Music at the Court of the Prince-Archbishops' **Anonymous** Ach kommet von Himmel, ihr göttliche Flammen. Ad pulpitum **Bernardi** Magnificat **HIF Biber** Fidicinium sacro-profanum – Sonata VI. O dulcis Jesu **CH Biber** Concerto a quattro per la chiesa **Biechteler** Aria de Sancta Scholastica **Hofer** Nisi Dominus **Megerle** Gaudate et exultate **Muffat** Armonico tributo – Sonata II

Emma Kirkby *sop*

Bell'Arte Salzburg / Annegret Siedel

Berlin Classics Ⓜ 0300120BC (63' • DDD)

An intriguing sequence of music by Mozart's Salzburg predecessors



The label rightly describes Dame Emma Kirkby as the *grande dame* of early music and it is amazing that the voice remains so pure and true, just as it did some 30 years ago. Her performances with this talented Salzburg group are always fresh and winning, helping to intensify this beautifully devised sequence, illuminating the period immediately before Bach and Handel.

Heinrich Biber is central to the sequence, with an instrumental item, the lively Sonata VI in A minor, and a vocal item, the so-called *Geistliche Konzert* (holy concerto) for soprano and strings, *O dulcis Jesu*; his son Carl has a *concerto a quattro* for church performance. Andreas Hofer is represented by a vigorous setting of Psalm 126 and Abraham Megerle by a motet, *Gaudete et exultate*, not as joyful as one might expect from that title.

Three of the six brief movements of the Sonata II of Georg Muffat are marked *Grave*, effectively alternating dark and light sections, with the final dance the lightest of all. The *Aria de Sancta Scholastica* of Mathias Biechteler has an intriguing *pizzicato* accompaniment, while the final anonymous item, *Ad pulpitum*, rounds things off with another light and sparkling piece, a fine vehicle for Emma Kirkby. Clear recording with fine atmosphere and a sense of presence convey the impression of a live event.

Edward Greenfield

'The Shadow Side'

Bingham The Shadow Side of Joy Finzi **McGuire** The Web: Five Love Songs **McLeod** Three Poems of Irina Ratushinskya **MacMillan** Three Soutar Settings **Mealor** Between Eternity and Time **Forbes** Two Songs from Songs: Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect **Traditional** Lasses, Love and Life – Aye Waukin, O!; The Laird o' Cockpen (both arr Maxwell Geddes). A Red, Red Rose (arr R Williams)

Irene Drummond *sop* **Iain Burnside** *pf*

Delphian Ⓕ DCD34099 (69' • DDD • T)

Contemporary Scottish songs sung by their leading champion



That the range of recent Scottish song is a wide one can hardly be doubted on hearing this disc from Irene Drummond. Edward McGuire (who contributes the informative booklet-notes) is represented by a subtly cumulative sequence that ably captures the fleeting emotion of Lesley Siddall's verse, love proving tangible and elusive by turns. John MacLeod's approach is understandably more demonstrative in his settings of Irina Ratushinskaya (whose poetry is synonymous with the decline of the Soviet Union), while just a little too interventionist to convey their stark observations in full measure. The contrast with two of John Maxwell Geddes's arrangements could hardly be greater, whether in the easeful sentiment of Robert Burns's "Aye Waulkin' O" or the quizzical humour of Carolina Oliphant's "The Laird o' Cockpen".

This first half of the recital is interspersed with James MacMillan's settings of William Soutar, which themselves range from the deftest poignancy to the most fervent rhetoric. Judith Bingham's compact "scena" adeptly interweaves verse by Joy Finzi with extracts from RD Blackmore's novel *Lorna Doone* in a heady sequence of elemental passion, while Lewis Forbes brings a fresh perspective to settings of Burns and Hugh MacDiarmid; as does Paul Mealor to those of Emily Dickinson, even if repetition of words and phrases is arguably to the detriment of their expressive detachment. Roderick Williams's arrangement of Burns then makes for a restrained yet enticing encore. Unfailingly attentive accompaniment from Iain Burnside and spacious but always focused sound further enhance a most desirable disc.

Richard Whitehouse

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Opera

Lucia from a darker Donizetti • Pappano's Guillaume Tell • Strauss in Rotterdam

Donizetti

Lucia di Lammermoor

Joan Sutherland *sop* ..... Lucia
Richard Greager *ten* ..... Edgardo
Malcolm Donnelly *bar* ..... Enrico
Clifford Grant *bass* ..... Raimondo
Sergei Baigildin *ten* ..... Arturo
Robin Donald *ten* ..... Normanno
Patricia Price *mez* ..... Alisa
Australian Opera Chorus; Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra / Richard Bonynge

Opera Australia Ⓑ ② OPOZ56005 (141' • ADD)
Recorded live at the Sydney Opera House, Australia, February 8, 1986

Donizetti

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Lucia di Lammermoor

Natalie Dessay *sop* ..... Lucia
Piotr Beczala *ten* ..... Edgardo
Vladislav Sulimsky *bar* ..... Enrico
Ilya Bannik *bass* ..... Raimondo
Dmitri Voropaev *ten* ..... Arturo
Sergei Skorokhodov *ten* ..... Normanno
Zhanna Dombrovskaya *mez* ..... Alisa
Orchestra and Chorus of the Mariinsky Theatre / Valery Gergiev

Mariinsky Ⓜ ② MAR0512 (131' • DDD/DSD • S/T/t)

Selected comparisons:
Royal Op, Bonynge, 1971 (5/72R) (DECC) 478 1513DH3
Hanover Band, Mackerras (A/98R) (SONY) 88697 57593-2
Royal Op, Serafin, 1959 (MYTO) 2CD00290

An audio release for Sutherland's filmed Lucia and a new Mariinsky recording





Online discographies (including off-air material) list no fewer than 11 *Lucia* recordings by Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonynge from the years 1966-88, including the complete, and for some still benchmark, Decca set of 1971 with Pavarotti's Edgardo, Milnes's Enrico and Ghiaurov's Raimondo, and the original made-for-TV 1986 film version of the present performance. For emotional and historical reasons alone it is an obvious choice for early release in Opera Australia's new series. But, as John Steane pointed out in a review of the original video release (4/93), the soprano was then in her 60th year and "gives a performance marvellous for a woman of any age but only in certain passages. The voice, as recorded and reproduced, has acquired a beat, an unevenness on held notes, that renders it something essentially different from what it was in her prime."

The performance, quite heavily cut, is enthusiastically projected by Bonynge and the orchestra. The well-remembered Clifford Grant and Malcolm Donnelly set to with a will and Richard Greager puts much bite into the hapless Edgardo. The sound is no better than its vintage but those who want an aural memoir of Sutherland on the wing would do better with performances from earlier dates, not forgetting Covent Garden's belated official release of her 1959 debut performance.

The new recording from the Mariinsky brings us into another world. Following Gergiev's and the label's habitual mix, the cast imports Natalie Dessay's tortured and youthful-sounding Lucia and Piotr Beczala's doomed Edgardo into a more home-grown ensemble. Valery Gergiev's Verdi has caused controversy in the past, so how authentic a Donizettian can he be? The basic answer is that the *tinta* he establishes for the work – a dark sound with good forward winds and present brass (the opposite of the smooth, over-romanticised sound favoured for this music in the first days of LP recording) – creates real atmosphere. Compared, say, with Bonynge's view, this is a neurotic, depressed Donizetti, surely right for this story. If this is not always Italian *slancio*, it certainly has its own mood and lift, a way of making a more authentic 1830s-sounding experience of Donizetti's score than the heartier Australian performance. It is also sensitive to dynamic markings: this is rarely a loud experience. And on a further question of authenticity, Gergiev relishes the glass harmonica sound in the Mad scene.

It's hard to make a general recommendation for *Lucia* these days. Callas and Sutherland fans know where to go; those who are more fans of Donizetti and the opera as one of the great *bel canto* dramas, and a sound world that doesn't sound like Verdi with the brakes on, should hear Mackerras's Hanover Band, and, now, Dessay's intelligently thought-out heroine, well captured in this new Russian set.

Mike Ashman

Rossini

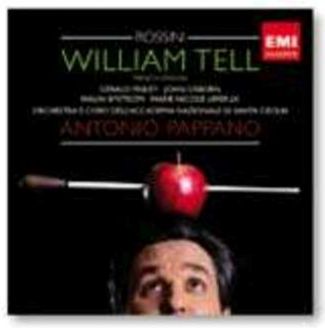
Guillaume Tell

Gerald Finley *bass-bar* ..... Guillaume Tell
Malin Byström *sop* ..... Mathilde
John Osborn *ten* ..... Arnold
Matthew Rose *bass* ..... Walter Furst
Frédéric Caton *bar* ..... Melchtal
Elena Xanthoudakis *sop* ..... Jemmy
Marie-Nicole Lemieux *contr* ..... Hedwige
Carlo Cigni *bass* ..... Gessler
Celso Albelo *ten* ..... Ruodi
Carlo Bosi *ten* ..... Rudolph
Dawid Kimberg *bar* ..... Leuthold
Davide Malvestio *bar* ..... Huntsman
Chorus and Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Antonio Pappano

EMI Ⓕ ③ 028826-2 (3h 28' • DDD • S/T/t/N)
Recorded live at the Sala Santa Cecilia, Auditorium Parco della Musica, Rome, October 16, 18 & 20, December 18, 20 & 21, 2010

Guillaume Tell – selected comparisons:
Gardelli (11/73R) (EMI) 640763-2
Luisi (A/05) (ORFE) C640 053D
Guglielmo Tell – selected comparison:
Chailly (1/81R) (DECC) 475 7723DOR4

A new William Tell that doesn't solve all the work's problems



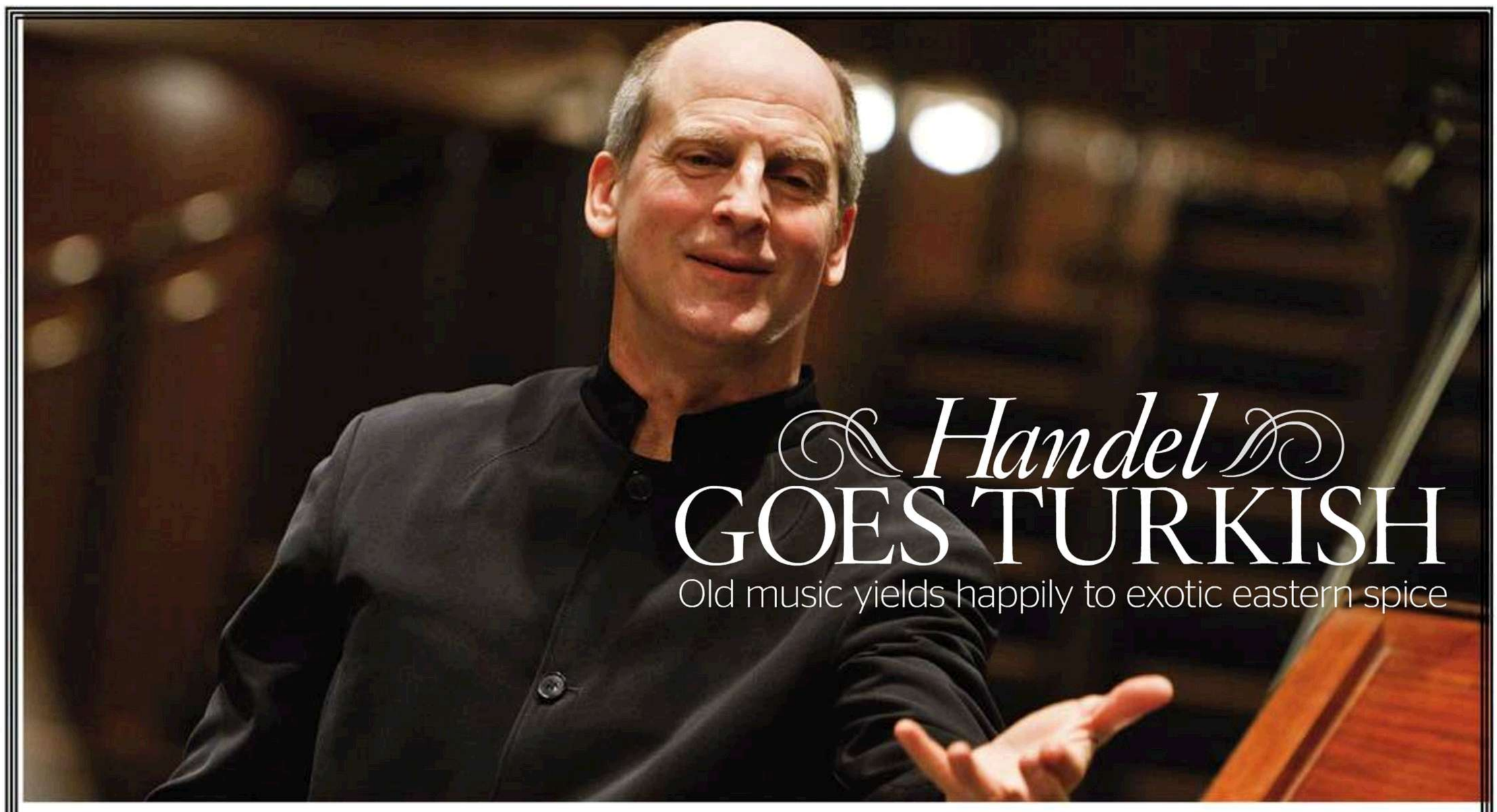
It is nearly 40 years since EMI released its classic recording of *Guillaume Tell*, Rossini's epic final opera; every note of it, in the original language with a largely Francophone cast headed by Gabriel Bacquier, Nicolai Gedda and Montserrat Caballé. The recording, which still sounds well on its budget-price four-CD reissue, was of particular importance, not least because the work had rarely received its due since its spectacularly staged premiere at the Paris Opéra in 1829.

There has never been any insuperable problem with the text. The original Eugène Troupenas edition (on which an admiring Hector Berlioz worked as a proof reader) is a plausible basis for any production of the opera, though since the completion of Elizabeth Bartlet's critical edition we know more about the many small emendations that were made at the time of the original staging which were not incorporated into the Troupenas edition. There is a particularly nice example in the new Pappano recording

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Handel GOES TURKISH

Old music yields happily to exotic eastern spice

Handel

'Amor Oriental'

Handel Agrippina – No, no ch'io non apprezzo[ab]. Alcina – Overture; Act 3, Prelude; Tamburino. Rinaldo – Augelletti che cantate[a]; Or la tromba[b]; Battaglia; Fermati…Non, crudel[ab]; Furie terribili[a]; Venti, turbini, prestate[b]; Prelude; Ah crudel[a]; Scherzano sul tuo volto…Ridono sul tuo labbro[ab]. Giulio Cesare – Son nata[ac]; Piangerò la sorte mia[a]; Empio, dirò, tu sei[b]; Se pietà di me non senti[a]. Serse – Ombra mai fù di vegetabile[b] **Anonymous** Hak şerleri hayreyler[cd]. Kanun Taksim[d]. Kemence improvisation[d]. Ud improvisation[d] Percussion improvisation[d]. Finale: Ilahis[abc] **Sebilci** Güzel Âsik[d]

[a]**Juanita Lascarro** *sop* [b]**Florin Cezar Ouatu** *counterten* [c]**Ahmet Özhan** *sngr* **Ensemble l'Arte del Mondo;** [d]**Pera Ensemble** (Mehmet Ihsan Özer *kanun/perc* Hassan Esen *kemençe* Volkan Yılmaz *ney/perc* David Kuckhermann *perc*), **Mehmet C Yeşilçay** *ud/perc* **/ Werner Ehrhardt**

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi Ⓕ 88697 85749-2

(69' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live in the Kammermusiksaal, Philharmonie, Berlin, October 13, 2010



"Händel alla turca" is the subtitle of this release, and that pretty much explains it. Werner Ehrhardt, formerly of Concerto Köln, and Mehmet C Yeşilçay of the Pera Ensemble, specialists in traditional Ottoman music, have combined to produce a theatre-piece built around numbers from *Rinaldo* and *Giulio Cesare* "Turkished". Why? The booklet cites the Baroque precedents of the *pasticcio* opera and of diplomatic occasions enriched by joint performances by musicians from the respective delegations, but this 70-minute concoction is clearly not primarily a historical exercise. Rather, it is a cross-cultural entertainment, and the best way to enjoy it is to stop thinking about it too much and just sit back and listen. The plot, if there is one, is too vague to worry about, but with tunes like "Piangerò", "Venti, turbini" and "Ombra mai fù" ardently sung and vigorously played, there is plenty to enjoy.

That is, unless you find the idea of these superb arias not only being set among rather slower-paced Turkish classical music but also acquiring the extra accompaniment of instruments such as ud, ney and kanun makes you queasy. Some throaty Turkish singing from Ahmet Özhan may also be not quite what you want from a Handel disc. If that is the case, stay away. But if, like me, you find the sounds of Handel's slow arias lovingly shadowed by Turkish instruments and his faster ones enlivened by percussion strangely haunting, then stick with it. Handel's greatness is undimmed but this new gloss brings a glow of community that seems appropriate to a composer of such compassion. The live recording is vivid and the sometimes ragged ensemble is no more than a small irritant under the circumstances. A one-off curiosity, certainly, but a worthwhile and touching one. **Lindsay Kemp**

INTERVIEW

Werner Ehrhardt

More than 10 years ago, Mehmet Yeşilçay and I had the idea to explore the music of the Seraglio – the Seraglio of Mozart's opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. We set out to explore what music was actually being heard in the Seraglio at the time of the opera – was this the real Ottoman music?

Early on it felt like one genre was against the other. But step by step the idea came that this Ottoman music might once have been played together with Western music. We had the idea to make a fiction surrounding this fascinating person Armida, told not from the Christian side but from the Oriental side.

The first time we met traditional Turkish musicians, it felt like another world – we felt very different from each other. Normally, when classical musicians play Ottoman music we are too stiff, too "classical". It's the same the other way around. You need time to get inside the music and to get a feeling for it. The first step is really to listen and really to observe. The next step is to play together.

We learnt that the choice of composer was vital; that in our own cultural environment we are used to hearing music in another way. For example, Mozart was really standing on the other side – on another plane. Likewise, the Turkish musicians couldn't feel any emotion in the music of Bach; they said it was like maths! But with Handel they found a connection both in the form and the gestures. We realised that we could come together without losing our own traditions; we could listen to each other and we could also find a sound that gets one world into the other. It became very exciting.

Interview by Andrew Mellor

PHOTOGRAPHY: DIRK PEUSER

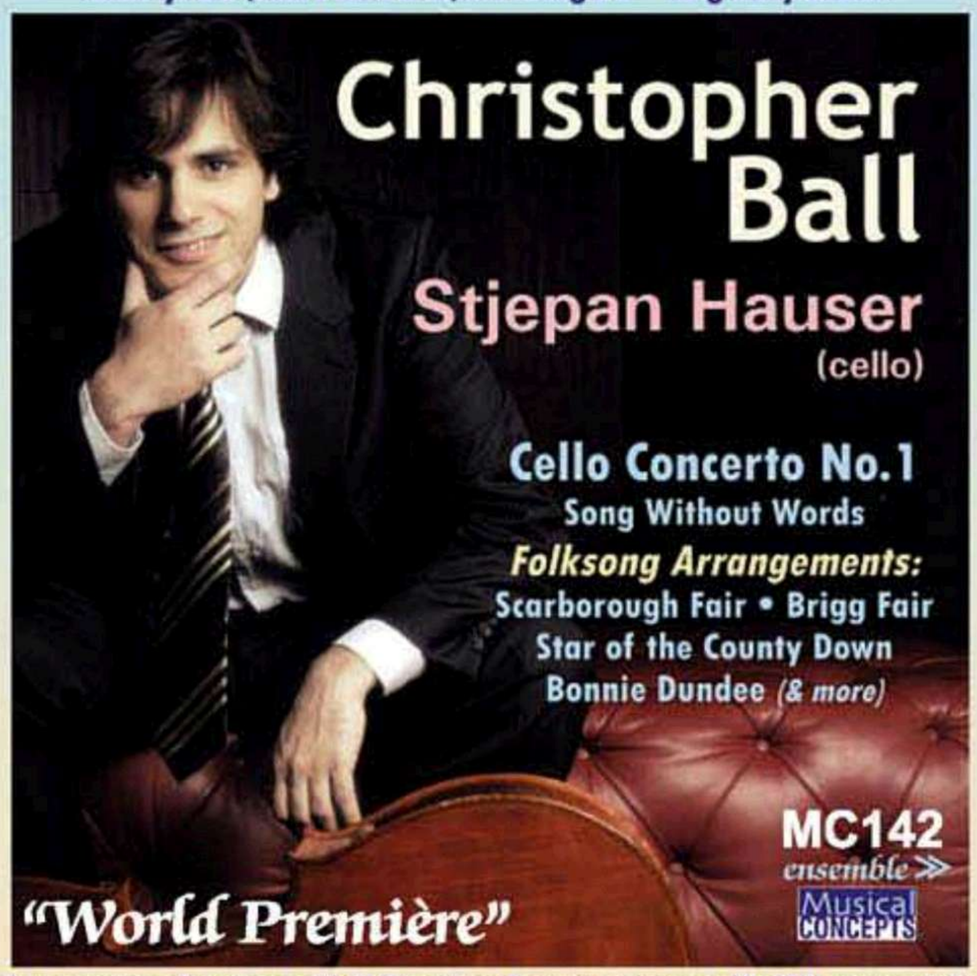
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Christopher Ball

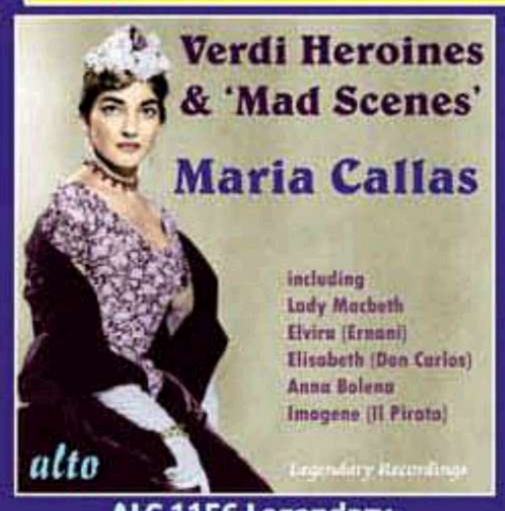
(of his music) "sheer joy throughout ...superbly crafted...beautifully lyrical"
"exquisite music....melodic & rhythmic variety ...hauntingly mellifluous"
"most lyrical (violin concerto) since Elgar's" "magically scored"



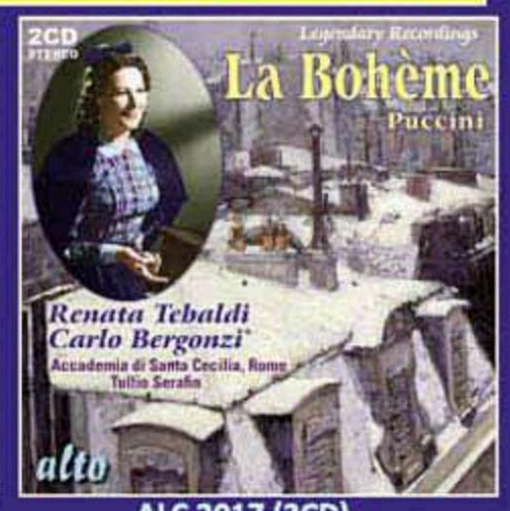
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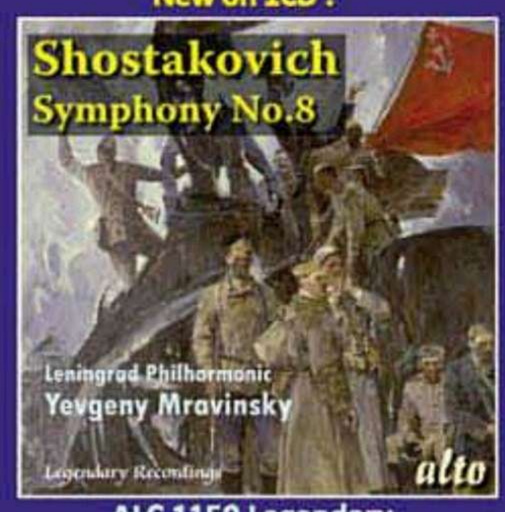
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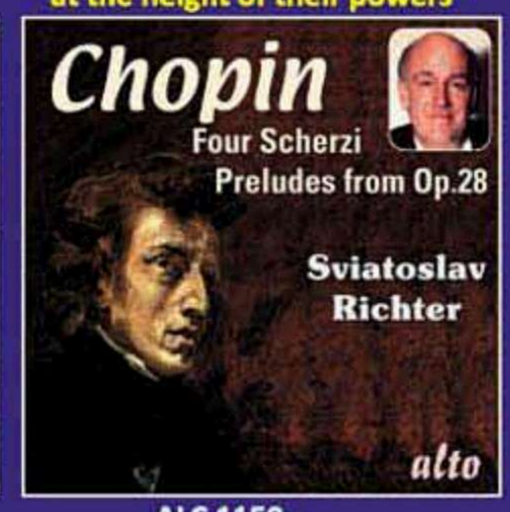
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when the chorus returns at the end of the "Tyrolienne" before the apple shooting.

Not that such niceties are of great moment in a recording that cuts some 25 minutes from the opera, much of it in Act 4, where the women's Trio and subsequent Prayer are summarily removed. Such cuts are commonplace in the theatre, as we can hear on Fabio Luisi's eloquently conducted live 1998 Vienna State Opera production, the house's first French-language *Tell*. But why on a major new recording where the third and final CD runs for a mere 55 minutes?

The answer, it seems, is that the recording, far from being the project's *raison d'être*, is essentially a commercial spin-off of the concert performances that have been taking place in Rome and London over the past year. And a somewhat casually produced spin-off it is too, with singers and even occasionally the chorus often disadvantaged by less than helpful microphone placings and a curious "Is it live or isn't it?" situation where the random inclusion of applause is concerned.

Collectors may want to hear the set for Gerald Finley's quietly authoritative Tell and for John Osborn's eloquent and affecting Arnold, small-scale by post-1830 standards but beautifully tailored and expertly sung. There is also an exceptional Jemmy from Elena Xanthoudakis. Malin Byström's Mathilde, alas, is no match for Caballé or for Mirella Freni on the unauthentically Italian, but none the less superbly theatrical, 1979 Chailly recording with Milnes and Pavarotti in stellar support.

After a musically distinguished Rossini *Stabat mater*, Pappano's conducting disappoints. Tempi are inconsistent, some too slow, others too fast, in a performance where the most vivid conducting appears to be reserved for those passages where the prominently placed but rather dryly recorded orchestra moves centre stage.

Richard Osborne

R Strauss Ⓡ

Der Rosenkavalier

Evelyn Lear *sop* ..... Die Feldmarschallin
Frederica von Stade *mez* .....Octavian
Jules Bastin *bass* .....Baron Ochs
Ruth Welting *sop* .....Sophie
Derek Hammond Stroud *bar* .....Faninal
José Carreras *ten* ..... Italian Tenor
Sophia can Sante *mez* ..... Annina
James Atherton *ten*..... Valzacchi
Nelly Morpurgo *sop*.....Leitmetzerin
Renée van Haarlem *sop* .....Milliner
Henk Smit *bass*.....Notary, Police Commissioner
Wouter Goedhart *ten* Marschallin's Major-Domo
Matthijs Coppens *ten* .....
.....Faninal's Major-Domo, Animal Seller
Adriaan van Limpt *ten* .....Landlord
Chorus of Netherlands Opera; Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra / Edo de Waart

Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra Vintage Recordings Ⓑ ③ RPVR2011-1 (3h 26' • ADD)
From Decca 473 361-2DOC3 (8/77ᴿ), recorded 1976

A stalwart of the Strauss catalogue reappears on its orchestra's own label



For all its fresh, lavish packaging, this *Rosenkavalier* set is the long-circulated, good-to-excellent 1976 studio recording licensed from Philips by the new Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra Vintage Recordings label, no doubt because its primary strength is orchestral. Though Edo de Waart continues giving fine performances of this opera, this outing – heard in the same remastering as its last Philips incarnation – has an individuality that's perhaps only possible in a longtime relationship between conductor and a non-operatic orchestra without a lot of interpretative baggage from past *Rosenkavaliers*.

More than anyone, de Waart makes the opera into a triptych: character details in the first act are found in the wind-writing and miniature wind symphonies such as the breakfast music between the Marshallin and Octavian, showing these rarefied Viennese circumstances in counterpoint to a simple-folk sense of play. Act 2 is in the intense, grand harmonic world of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*; those famous orchestral effects suggesting the gleam of the silver rose are as forward-looking as anything in *Elektra*. In the final act, de Waart has the farcical buoyance of operetta until the famously cathartic trio – climaxed with supreme effect – when the Marschallin frees Octavian to marry age-appropriate Sophie.

Vocally, Frederica von Stade is at her peak in a particularly tormented, emotionally mature portrayal of Octavian. As Baron Ochs, Jules Bastin's bass has none of the pitch-obscuring rumble of his German counterparts, so that nothing gets in the way of the flood of character details from his considerable theatrical imagination. Ruth Welting's Sophie is just fine, vocally and theatrically, if not that distinctive. José Carreras is in fine voice but shouts his way through his aria. Evelyn Lear's Marschallin, long considered this set's sticking-point, is better than its reputation: once past the opening scene (whose fine emotional shading is lost in her demure singing), she's animated with the Baron, and stays that way, even if her vocal freshness varies from scene to scene. Too bad this set wasn't taken from the live performances prior to the studio sessions: if Lear was in iffy voice, a live performance might have brought out a stronger communicative imperative.

David Patrick Stearns

'Gioia!'

Bellini I puritani – Son vergin vezzosa **Donizetti** L'elisir d'amore – Una parola, Adina[a]. Lucia di Lammermoor – Regnava nel silenzio **J Strauss II** Die Fledermaus – Mein Herr Marquis **Moniuszko** The Haunted Manor – Do grobu trwac w bezzennym stanie **Mozart** Le nozze di Figaro – Giunse alfin il momento…Deh vieni, non tardar **Puccini** La bohème – Quando m'en vò soletta. Gianni Schicchi – O mio babbino caro **Rossini** Il barbiere di Siviglia – Una voce poco fa **Verdi** Rigoletto – Gualtier Maldè…Caro nome. La traviata – È strano!…Ah, fors'è lui… Sempre libera[a]

Aleksandra Kurzak *sop* [a]**Francesco Demuro** *ten*
Orchestra of the Comunitat Valencia / Omer Meir Wellber

Decca Ⓕ 478 2730DH (61' • DDD • T/t)

Comedy moments are the high-points in this Polish soprano's debut recital



The title of the young Polish soprano's CD debut is a cliché but one befitting the energy with which she dispatches top notes, both written and unwritten. London has done well by Aleksandra Kurzak – seven roles at Covent Garden since 2005, several of which can be sampled here.

So, what's special? The tone quality of the voice, in which an apparently endless sparkle is subtly coloured by darker, East European tints. The accuracy of pitch and intervals (the London *Times* used a cricketing analogy, "straight sixes", to describe her virtuosity in *Matilde di Shabran*). The ability to act with the voice (Adele and Lauretta, which follow each other here, sound really radically different). Also, and it's not as common as you may think, she conveys a real sense of text understood.

There's a goodly range of repertoire but this is too early in the day seriously to play Beckmesser. As caught here, let us just say that Kurzak sounds happiest in comedy (in the broadest sense). Only the Violetta excerpt (performed in a company DVD promotion in a basque and stockings) sounds a little heavy for her at the moment. Or perhaps that's just a style question, because there's no lack of weight in Musetta's calling-card or Lauretta's plea to her father. The *jeu d'esprit* aria from Moniuszko's *The Haunted Manor*, replete with gypsy-like violin obbligato, is both a treat and a good closer.

The young Israeli maestro Omer Meir Wellber, a Barenboim pupil and the new music director of Valencia's Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, accompanies with exceptional style and imagination.

Mike Ashman

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DVD & Blu-ray

Lully's penultimate opera revived • Cleveland's Hall on film • Handel oratorios staged

Beethoven

Symphonies – No 4, Op 60; No 7, Op 92.
Coriolan, Op 62

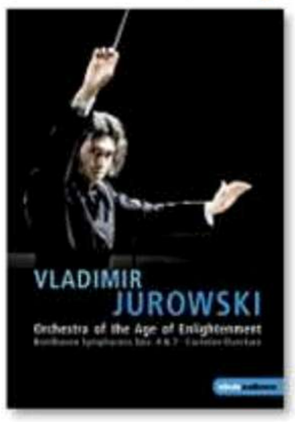
Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment / Vladimir Jurowski

Video director **Olivier Simmonet**

Ideale Audience Ⓕ DVD 307 9298 (89' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo and DTS 5.1 • 0)

Recorded live at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Paris, February 4, 2010

A Beethovenian treat for Parisian audiences, magnificently played



It seems strange for an English orchestra to be filmed on a visit to France. But how lucky the Parisians were to experience this magnificent concert. It begins with the *Coriolan* overture, passion offset by delicate, liquid playing from the woodwind. Vladimir Jurowski imbues the Fourth Symphony with the same passion. After the mysterious, tentative whispers of the slow introduction, the first movement bowls along with a muscularity more readily associated with the odd-numbered symphonies; there's an exhilarating snap to the syncopations. Mystery returns in the hushed playing of the strings and the timpani rolls – in B major, which must have been a shock in 1807 – before the *crescendo* that heralds Jurowski's mighty recapitulation.

If the *Adagio* is not so memorable – it comes across as restless and episodic – the third movement, a *scherzo* in all but name, is tautly controlled, with songful phrases from the woodwind in the Trio. The finale follows without a break, the violins skittering along with an impressive precision, matched by Andrew Watts's bassoon and complemented by Antony Pay's lyrical clarinet.

The Seventh Symphony is even better. Jurowski keeps an iron grip on the dancing rhythm of the first-movement *Vivace*, screwing up the tension with the minor- and major-second clashes in the development section. The flowing tune in the *Allegretto* is lovingly phrased by the violas and cellos, while the fugato for all the strings is a model of clarity; and I loved the way Jurowski holds back briefly – both times – before the *maggiore*. As in the Fourth, the finale follows the third movement immediately. The horns are doubled: it's hard to tell with the trumpets, but four players are listed.

All the repeats are taken; the violins are separated. The only flaw is the camerawork, which fussily cuts from section to section. Throw a blanket over the screen, and marvel.

Richard Lawrence

Berlioz

Les Troyens

Daniela Barcellona *mez* ..... Dido
Lance Ryan *ten* ..... Aeneas
Elisabete Matos *sop* ..... Cassandra
Gabriele Viviani *bar* ..... Choroebus
Zlata Bulicheva *cont* ..... Anna
Stephen Milling *bass* ..... Narbal
Giorgio Giuseppini *bass* ..... Pantheus
Oksana Shilova *sop* ..... Ascanius
Eric Cutler *ten* ..... Iopas

Chorus of the Generalitat Valenciana; Orchestra of the Communitat Valenciana / Valery Gergiev

Stage director **La Fura dels Baus; Carlus Padrissa**

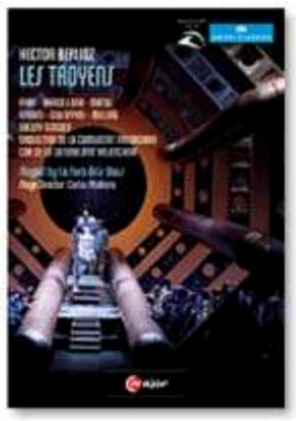
Video director **Tiziano Mancini**

C Major Ⓕ ② DVD 706008; Ⓕ Blu-ray 706104 (4h 21' • NTSC • 1080p • 16:9 • PCM stereo, DTS 5.1 & DTS-HD MA 5.1 • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Palau de les Arts 'Reina Sofia', Valencia, October-November 2009

Bonus feature: 'Making of Les Troyens'

A sci-fi Trojans from Valencia is all effects and no action



This production can only have been more fun in the theatre than it is here. Virgil's 2000-year-old *Aeneid* may be showing its age by now but do we really want to see Berlioz's epic treatment of it updated as science fiction? The result looks like a lost film from the *Star Wars* series – "The Trojan Horse Menace" or "The Revenge of Queen Dido" – in search of a high-class soundtrack. The ancient city of Carthage has become the inside of a spaceship's engine room, and Trojans and Carthaginians alike look ludicrous, dressed as storm troopers or futuristic American footballers.

Like other productions by La Fura dels Baus, their *Les Troyens* has some big theatrical effects – the devouring of the priest by a sea serpent, for example – but watching opera in the privacy of one's home demands a very different kind of experience. A single click of the remote control and you can get far more effective television sci-fi in any repeat episode of *Star Trek*. Here the spectacle is cut down to size on the small screen and it quickly becomes evident there is nothing apart from the big effects going on – certainly no acting to speak of. Too much is gloomy, static and uninvolving.

The cast in Valencia has its strengths, prime among them the proud, brassy mezzo of Daniela Barcellona as Dido (though, poor dear, what a dreadful wig she has to wear, making her look like Minnie Mouse). Elisabete Matos is a properly intense Cassandra, and Lance Ryan as an Aeneas visiting from another planet, ray gun in hand, balances the lyrical and heroic sides of the role nicely. Otherwise, there are some good voices (Eric Cutler's Iopas and Stephen Milling's Narbal) and others which are uncomfortably pushed (Gabriele Viviani's out-of-tune Choroebus and Dmitry Voropaev's strained Hylas).

Gergiev rouses the Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana to some energetic playing. But all this will be irrelevant to anybody who wants to enjoy the grandeur and romance of Berlioz's opera. Only the knowledge that *Gramophone* reviewers never shirk their duty kept me persevering through this depressing farrago to the end.

Richard Fairman

Mahler

Symphony No 10 – Adagio.
Lieder aus 'Das Knaben Wunderhorn'[a]

[a]**Magdalena Kozená** *sop* [a]**Christian Gerhaher** *bar*
Cleveland Orchestra / Pierre Boulez

Video director **William Cosel**

Accentus Ⓕ DVD ACC20231; Ⓕ Blu-ray ACC10231 (88' • NTSC • 1080i • 16:9 • PCM stereo, DTS 5.1 & DTS-HD MA 5.1 • 0 • s)

Recorded live at Severance Hall, Cleveland, OH, February 11-13, 2010

Bonus: Interview with Pierre Boulez

Bruckner

Symphony No 8 (1887 version, ed Nowak)

Cleveland Orchestra / Franz Welser-Möst

Video director **William Cosel**

ArtHaus Musik Ⓕ DVD 101 581 (112' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo & DTS 5.1 • 0)

Recorded live at Severance Hall, Cleveland, OH, August 2010

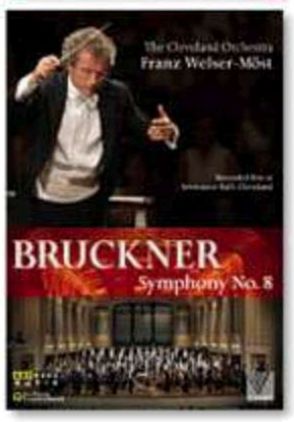
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Bonus: Pre-concert talk with Dee Perry, Franz Welser-Möst and William Cosel

Boulez and Welser-Möst on the podium in Cleveland





How, I wonder, would Gustav Mahler have reacted to the implied attention-deficit at the quiet start of one of his finest songs, "Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen", with its heartbreaking echoes of war and love, the orchestral introduction played to a visual accompaniment of distracted hall-scanning, as if the initial absence of a voice had induced insufferable boredom? It's bad enough when members of the audience feel fidgety and of course I appreciate that, given the context, there are limited options (the recently refurbished Severance Hall in Cleveland is, after all, extremely handsome), but surely a single well-chosen point of focus would have been preferable.

Still, the plus-points outweigh the minuses. Magdalena Kožená is an engaging performer; a sensitive one too, who tellingly alters her expressive demeanour between the close of the carefree "Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht?" and the anguished start of "Das irdische Leben". She relates well to her audience ("Lob des hohen Verstandes" draws forth a quiet chorus of titters) and, while Christian Gerhaher is rather more formal in his approach, they're a nicely matched pair and Pierre Boulez cues a discreet accompaniment. Also, the visual interplay between soloists makes more sense in the songs than in the symphony.

As to the music itself, Boulez explains in a bonus interview the problems posed by having to negotiate a movement with only two basic tempo markings as guidance; but given the evidence of his lucidly flowing performance you'd never know that Mahler's directions were anything less than fastidious and plentiful. The interview itself is of considerable interest but concerning the Tenth the one question I expected to see pop up on the screen (for some reason the interviewer's voice has been edited out) was "how do you feel about completed versions of the symphony?"

No joy there, I'm afraid. Many readers will know that the programme is already available on a Deutsche Grammophon CD (11/10) and, while Accentus Music specify the concert dates as February 11-13, 2010 and DG quote only "2/2010", both sound much the same, even though the timings differ slightly for some of the songs. Franz Welser-Möst's Cleveland Bruckner Eighth enjoys superior production values, with next to no wandering lenses and visual images that invariably correspond to what we're hearing, which, unusually, is Leopold Nowak's edition of the 1887 original (earlier Cleveland recordings under Szell and Dohnányi feature the 1890/Nowak and 1887/90/Haas editions respectively). In a bonus interview, Welser-Möst merely alludes to his chosen edition (he has played others, apparently), but those who know their Bruckner Eighth and aren't as yet acquainted with the 1887 version are in for a shock. Some of the music is quite different to what we normally hear (the *Scherzo*'s Trio, for example) and although the overall architecture is familiar, sort of, there are countless links and bridges that aren't.

As to the performance (which is very well recorded), no one could accuse the Clevelanders of lacking commitment: the strings in particular look and sound intensely involved (rare in Bruckner) and Welser-Möst boldly holds the whole unwieldy edifice together. Indeed, if you fancy putting aside 90 or so minutes for an expansive take on one of the greatest symphonies ever composed, then you won't be wasting your time.

I would be fascinated to hear from any reader who learns the symphony from this version then switches to the more concise 1890 alternative. How would it seem that way round? From this end the longer version suggests necessary trimming, but that may well be because I know and love the shorter score already. Try it and let me know.

Rob Cowan

Lully

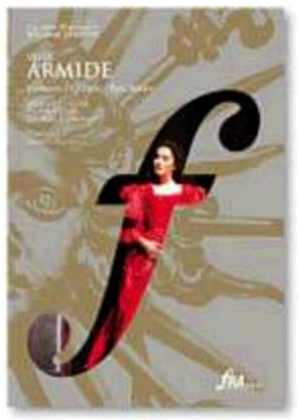
Armide

Stéphanie d' Oustrac *sop* ..... Armide
Paul Agnew *ten* ..... Renaud
Claire Debono *sop* ... La Gloire, Phénice, Lucinde
Isabelle Druet *sop* .....La Sagesse, Sidonie, Mélisse
Nathan Berg *bar* ..... Hidraot
Marc Mauillon *ten* ..... Aronte, Ubalde
Marc Callahan *bar* .....Artémidore
Laurent Naouri *bar* ..... La Haine
Andrew Tortise *ten* ..... Danish Knight
Virginie Thomas *sop*..... Water Nymph
Les Arts Florissants Chorus and Orchestra / William Christie
Stage director **Robert Carsen**
Video director **François Roussillon**

FRA Productions Ⓕ DVD FRA005 (3h 18' • NTSC • 16.9 • PCM stereo & 5.1 • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, Paris, October 2008

Lully's last tragedy is an exuberant triumph in this Paris production



The story of Armida's love for Rinaldo, drawn from the epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* by Torquato Tasso (1544-95), was taken up by dozens of opera composers, of whom Lully, Handel, Gluck, Haydn, Rossini and Dvořák are merely the most famous. *Armide*, first performed in 1686, was Lully's penultimate opera. As with its predecessors, *Amadis* and *Roland*, the subject was chosen by Louis XIV. The king was customarily praised to the skies in an allegorical prologue. Something of a problem for present-day directors, it's brilliantly solved here by Robert Carsen: Glory and Wisdom, dressed in steel-grey suits, show images of Louis on a screen, after which a group of tourists appears on film being guided round Versailles. The tourists become dancers and the Prologue ends with Paul Agnew asleep on a luxurious bed.

In the opera, Glory and Wisdom turn into Phénice and Sidonie, Armide's confidantes. Armide's dress is scarlet, the predominant colour of the costumes. If the late arrivals in the Overture recall Laurent Pelly's production of Rameau's *Platée*, the synchronised gestures of the chorus are reminiscent of Peter Sellars's equally memorable staging of Handel's *Theodora*. Armide, in love with her enemy Renaud despite herself, is all too aware that she can only get him to love her in return by employing her magical powers. She summons Hatred – Laurent Naouri, sounding uncomfortable in a role written for tenor – only to dismiss her (sic!). In the end, Armide is supposed to fly away in a chariot, like Medea in *Thésée* on her dragon; here she kills herself, and the tourists of the Prologue return to chase Renaud, now returned to being Paul Agnew, away from the stage bed on which he has been snoozing.

Stéphanie d'Oustrac makes a magnificent Armide, passionate and despairing. Agnew, so experienced in this repertoire, is equally memorable, not least in the sleep scene, where he lies on what literally becomes a bed of roses. There's excellent support from Nathan Berg and the other singers, the only ropy moment being an unaccompanied female chorus in Act 2. The scene where two knights save each other from female temptation is treated as comedy: amusing, but Lully and Quinault, his librettist, would not have approved. William Christie conducts with his customary exuberance: roll on *Atys*, revived last May at the Opéra Comique!

Richard Lawrence

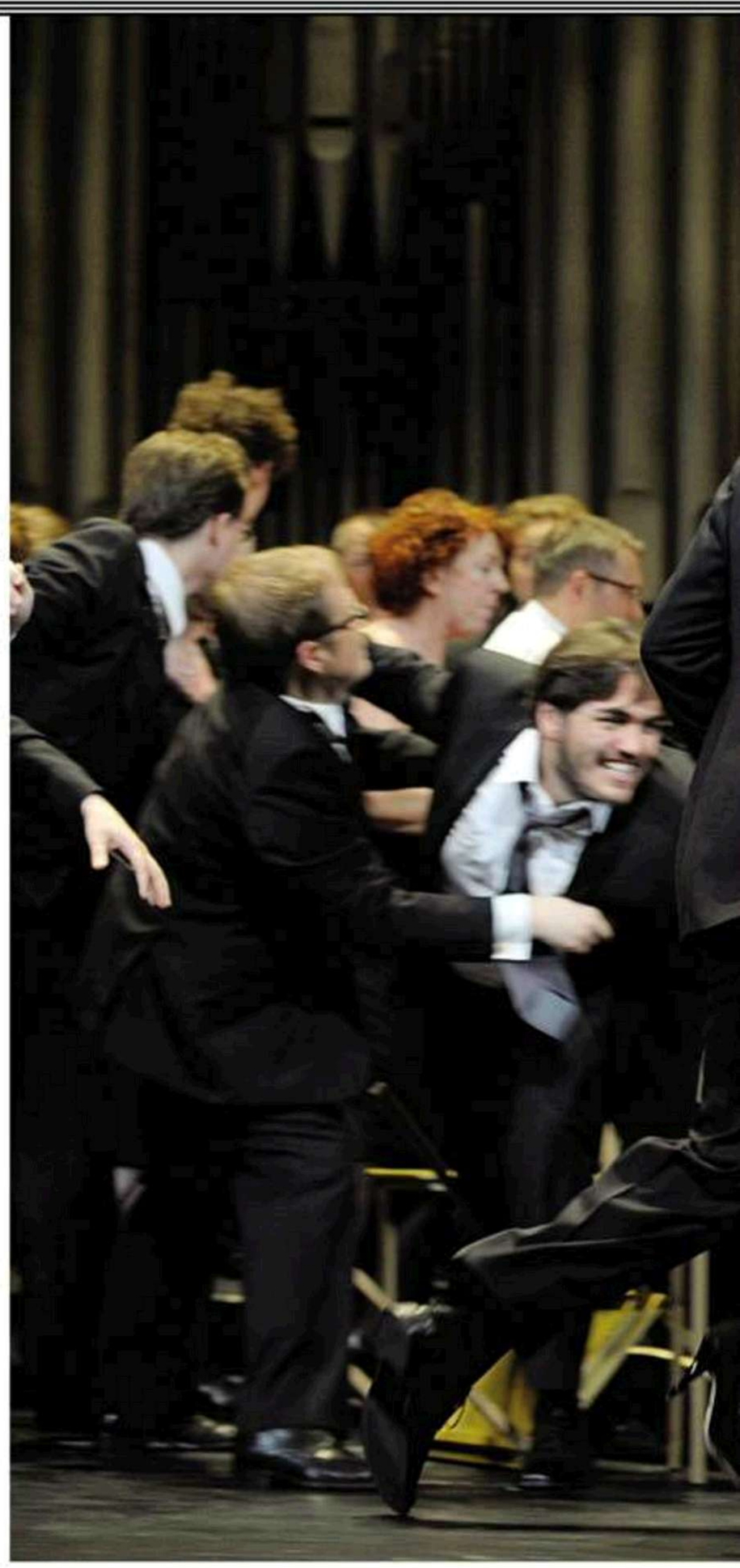
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Handel DIVIDED

Success and faliure in oratorio stagings



Handel

Belshazzar

Kenneth Tarver *ten* ..... Belshazzar
Rosemary Joshua *sop* ..... Nitocris
Bejun Mehta *counterten* ..... Cyrus
Kristina Hammarström *mez* ..... Daniel
Neal Davies *bass* ..... Gobrias
RIAS Chamber Choir; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin / René Jacobs
Stage directors **Christof Nel, Martina Jochem**
Video director **Don Kent**
Harmonia Mundi Ⓕ ② DVD HMD990 9028/9; Ⓕ Blu-ray HMD980 9028 (166' • NTSC • 1080p • 16:9 • PCM stereo, DTS 5.1 & DTS-HD MA • 0 • N/s).
Recorded live at the Grand Théâtre de Provence, July 23, 2008

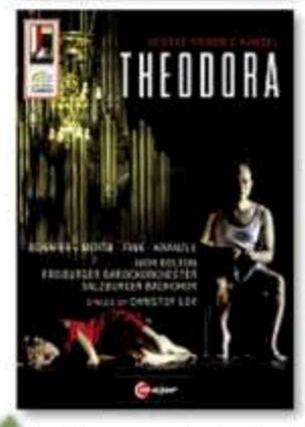
Handel

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Theodora

Christine Schäfer *sop* ..... Theodora
Bejun Mehta *counterten* ..... Didymus
Joseph Kaiser *ten* ..... Septimius
Bernarda Fink *contr* ..... Irene
Johannes Martin Kränzle *bass* ..... Valens
Ryland Davies *ten* ..... Messenger
Salzburg Bach Choir; Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Ivor Bolton
Stage director **Christof Loy**
Video director **Hannes Rossacher**
C Major Ⓕ ② DVD 705708; Ⓕ Blu-ray 705804
(3h 9' • NTSC • 1080p • 16:9 • PCM stereo, DTS 5.1 & DTS-HD MA • 0 • N/s). Recorded live at the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, August 16-21, 2009





These two DVDs present fully staged productions of two of Handel's very finest dramatic English works; there are powerful visual moments in both productions regardless of the unsolvable debate about whether operatic staging of oratorios works absolutely for complex works that the composer designed for concert presentation. However, the 2008 Aix-en-Provence performance of *Belshazzar* is infuriating because René Jacobs's decisions – unhistorical, unstylish and profoundly unmusical – cause a cornucopia of horrible aberrations. His conducting technique is astonishingly bad; he frequently grunts loudly and gestures bizarrely as if he is hanging up the washing to dry, regardless of the musical metre and mood. Worse still are his distrustful intrusions into instrumentation: during the debauched anti-hero's defiant exit "I thank thee Sesach" the voice part is inauthentically doubled by bassoon (the result is not merely inaccurate but tasteless); the sublime duet "Great victor, at thy feet I bow" has a flute needlessly added to the first violins (a typical example of many pointless tinkerings); the gloating Babylonian chorus "Ye tutelar gods" is marred by the ridiculous addition of tambourine and recorders.

Many of the choruses are undermined by Jacobs's decision to have important lines sung by a group of soloists; this incorrectly applied practice is liberally daubed all over proceedings, and ruins the miraculous opening phrase of "Recall, O King, thy rash command" (in which the horrified Jews beg Belshazzar not to drink from the sacred cups). Invasive *basso continuo*-playing persistently interferes during recitatives in mannered ways (one longs for a few simple chords so that the singers can be allowed to get on with their jobs), and Jacobs also provides numerous little instrumental interludes between numbers (none of them advantageous or plausible). The list of horrors could go on but it suffices to conclude that Jacobs's musical direction is catastrophic (unless you don't know the oratorio, in which case you might be easily gulled by its undeniable energy).

Happily, stage producers Christof Nel and Martina Jochem place their faith entirely in Charles Jennens's plot and characters; this production is a rare instance of a sincere staging full of good things being fundamentally undermined by gimmicky musicianship (usually one expects the reverse!). The unchanging set features several rising levels across which the Babylonians, Persians and Jews interact, proclaim and respond. The capable RIAS Chamber Choir get stuck in to the dramatic story and the entire cast achieve an abundance of highly effective acting and dramatic visual ideas, even if it gets a bit wearisome that Kenneth Tarver's loony-eyed Belshazzar strides about the stage wielding a golden axe almost constantly – even in scenes where his maniacal posturing has no place. Most of the singers are superb and their acting draws us into the contrasting moralities and fortunes of their characters.

Rosemary Joshua and Neal Davies each perform their roles as suffering parents very movingly. Bejun Mehta's coloratura in the noble Cyrus's faster arias is dazzling; "Destructive war" is much too hurried by Jacobs but the stage action of the chorus throwing down their swords and vowing to pursue peace is exhilarating.

The 2009 Salzburg production of Handel's penultimate masterpiece *Theodora* – his only English oratorio set in early Christian times – is much more rewarding. Christof Loy

PHOTOGRAPHY: MONIKA RITTERSHAUS

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Running for her life: Christine Schäfer as Theodora in Salzburg

eschews stage scenery in favour of a moodily lit backdrop of the festival hall's massive pipe organ and props of just sparse wooden chairs (which are used or cleared smoothly by soloists and the Salzburg Bach Choir as the scenes require). The action is intensely dramatic but tends to shy away from narrative staging – in some respects the result is like a semi-staged concert with intense acting and a mobile chorus.

Christine Schäfer adopts a fragile demeanour as Theodora and her English pronunciation isn't bad. Bejun Mehta is less vocally immaculate here than in *Belshazzar*: his spirited performance of Didymus's heroic arias in Act 1 and the two sublime duets are enjoyable but I didn't enjoy his vibrato and peculiar closed-mouth treatment of vowels in "Deeds of kindness" as much as the enthusiastic Salzburg audience. Joseph Kaiser gives an outstanding vocal and dramatic performance as the beleaguered Roman guard Septimius: "Descend kind pity" is sung beautifully and his emotive acting throughout is a key part of the production's success – at the final tragic scene the camerawork shows him to be genuinely in tears as his friends are martyred. The Salzburg Bach Choir manages the impressive feat of moving around a lot while remaining vocally balanced and blended (and their English is flawless). The insertion of the Organ Concerto in G minor (HWV310) partway through Act 3 is odd (Handel performed it between the parts of *Theodora* but not during the drama). The musical provision from the classy team of the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and Ivor Bolton is exemplary at letting Handel do the talking.

David Vickers



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Rob Cowan's monthly survey of reissues and archive recordings

Box-sets to relish

Dashing Johann Strauss • Two remarkable violinists • EMI showcases Klaus Tennstedt

Replay priorities this month include a number of interesting box-sets. Amazing that anything should have recently emerged from Japan, given the natural disasters that have befallen its shores, and yet, in spite of it all, the Japanese label Opus Kura has produced a dazzling eight-CD "**Johann Strauss** Collection", with selections that range, chronologically, from 1901 (the Carl Wilhelm Drescher Orchestra of Vienna playing *The Blue Danube*) to the second part of the 1954 Vienna New Year Concert with the Philharmonic under Clemens Krauss, recorded live, complete with radio announcements and including some of the most dashing Strauss family performances on disc. That's the last CD in the set, whereas the first features 13 versions of *The Blue Danube* – from Sousa's Band in 1905 and Frieda Hempel singing in 1916 to a wartime recording by Krauss, and classic 78s under Weingartner and Erich Kleiber. Two CDs of Great Conductors showcase many diverse styles: Toscanini (*Danube* again); Furtwängler (*Fledermaus* Overture, Berlin, 1937); Leinsdorf in Cleveland (*Thunder and Lightning*); Szell in Vienna (*Tritsch-Tratsch*); a wonderful *Kuss-Walzer* under Knappertsbusch (Berlin, 1933); Koussevitzky in Boston conducting a truncated *Wiener Blut*; Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops in *Neu Wien*, and very much more. The fourth and fifth CDs concentrate largely on great singers and musical entertainers: the Comedian Harmonists, Lotte Schöne, Tauber of course, Ivogün, Gerhardt, Ponselle, Cebotari and so on. There's a Strauss Salon Concert with the Dorsey Brothers, Bing Crosby (2'46" of the *Emperor Waltz* in 1947), Albert Sandler, Dajos Béla, Marek Weber, Harry Horlick and others, and a CD of Historical Acoustical Recordings which features the likes of Mengelberg, Stokowski and Frederick Stock. The transfers are in most cases exemplary (the source material is usually first-rate) and, as Strauss family collections go, this is surely among the most stimulating and musically/historically significant. The fact that it's old will cease to bother you after the first 10 minutes or so.

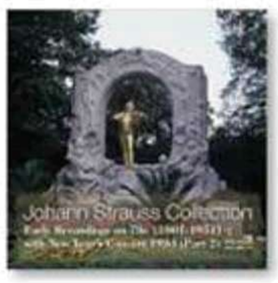
> 'As Strauss family collections go, this is surely among the most stimulating and significant'

Aficionados of quality violin-playing can be grateful to Doremi for unearthing rare live recordings by Cairo-born Swiss violinist **Aïda Stucki** and Israeli-born Ivry Gitlis, both players providing performances that more than transcend the "dated" sound barrier. Stucki's set (Vol 2 – Vol 1 is a six-CD all-Mozart collection) carries a testimonial from her pupil Anne-Sophie Mutter, who freely admits that "my remarkable teacher has been a lifelong inspiration to me". Stucki's many laudable qualities include a strong musical presence, a vibrantly expressive tone and consistently sensitive phrasing, all of them very apparent in a radio broadcast of the three Brahms sonatas with Walter Frey at the piano. We're also given a glowing rendition Brahms's Second String Quartet led by Stucki, the whole of the so-called "FAE" Sonata (by Brahms, Schumann and Dietrich), Beethoven's Sonata No 10 and works by Haydn, Mozart and Dvořák. The one commercial recording included (a Vox production from 1953) is Schumann's *Fantasie* under Rolf Reinhardt.

The **Ivry Gitlis** collection celebrates a very different kind of musical personality, excitable, wildly spontaneous and with a distinctive if (at times) edgy tone. A reckless-sounding Sibelius Concerto with the New York Philharmonic under George Szell dates from the year of Gitlis's debut US tour (1955) and, while the pairing of Gitlis with the urbane cellist Maurice Gendron looks unlikely on paper, the partnership works well in Brahms's Double Concerto (1970). Paganini's Second Concerto (Stanisław Skrowaczewski, 1972) and Hindemith's Concerto of 1939 (Sixten Ehrling, 1966) are fairly characteristic and there's an interesting violin concerto by composer-conductor René Leibowitz, a world-premiere performance from 1961 given under the composer's own direction. Tucked in among the varied and enjoyable contents of the Gitlis DVD (mostly single movements and encore pieces) is a complete performance of the Berg Concerto from 1992, a moving collaboration with the WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne, under the much under-appreciated Hans Vonk. Doremi's sound quality is consistently better for Stucki than for Gitlis, though the latter set passes muster (and the Berg sounds excellent). Both sets gave me a great deal of pleasure, and I eagerly await a Gitlis Vol 2.

EMI's repackaging policy recently extended to their catalogue of recordings by **Klaus Tennstedt**, the LPO Mahler cycle being an obvious priority (16 CDs including *Das Lied von der Erde* and additional live recordings of Symphonies Nos 5, 6 and 7). Tennstedt's "Great EMI Recordings", many of which will already be familiar to CD collectors, opens with an immensely imposing *Eroica* Symphony recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall in the autumn of 1991. The *Pastoral* and Eighth were both taped at London's Abbey Road Studios, as were Brahms's First and the *German Requiem* (with Jessye Norman and Jorma Hynninen – interesting to compare that with a performance from the same year, 1984, on BBC Legends). The majority of recordings are with the LPO but there's a Mahler First with the Chicago Symphony and a generous selection of sessions with the Berlin Philharmonic – Bruckner's Symphony No 4, for one, and some blazing Schumann (the Third and Fourth Symphonies, the life-affirming *Konzertstück* for four horns) as well as Mendelssohn's Fourth, Schubert's Ninth and Dvořák's Ninth, and two purely orchestral Wagner programmes. Most performances focus on a keen rostrum presence with a warm heart, a sincere, expansive and occasionally idiosyncratic personality and, in the larger works, a marked sense of musical scale. A good basis for evaluation and re-evaluation, provided you also bear in mind the various live recordings that are available, especially those on the LPO's own label.

THE RECORDINGS



J Strauss II Collection **Various artists**
Opus Kura Ⓕ ⑧ OPK1006/13

Various Cpsrs Vn Wks, Vol 2 **Stucki**
Doremi Ⓜ ③ DHR8006/8

Various Cpsrs Vn Wks **Gitlis**
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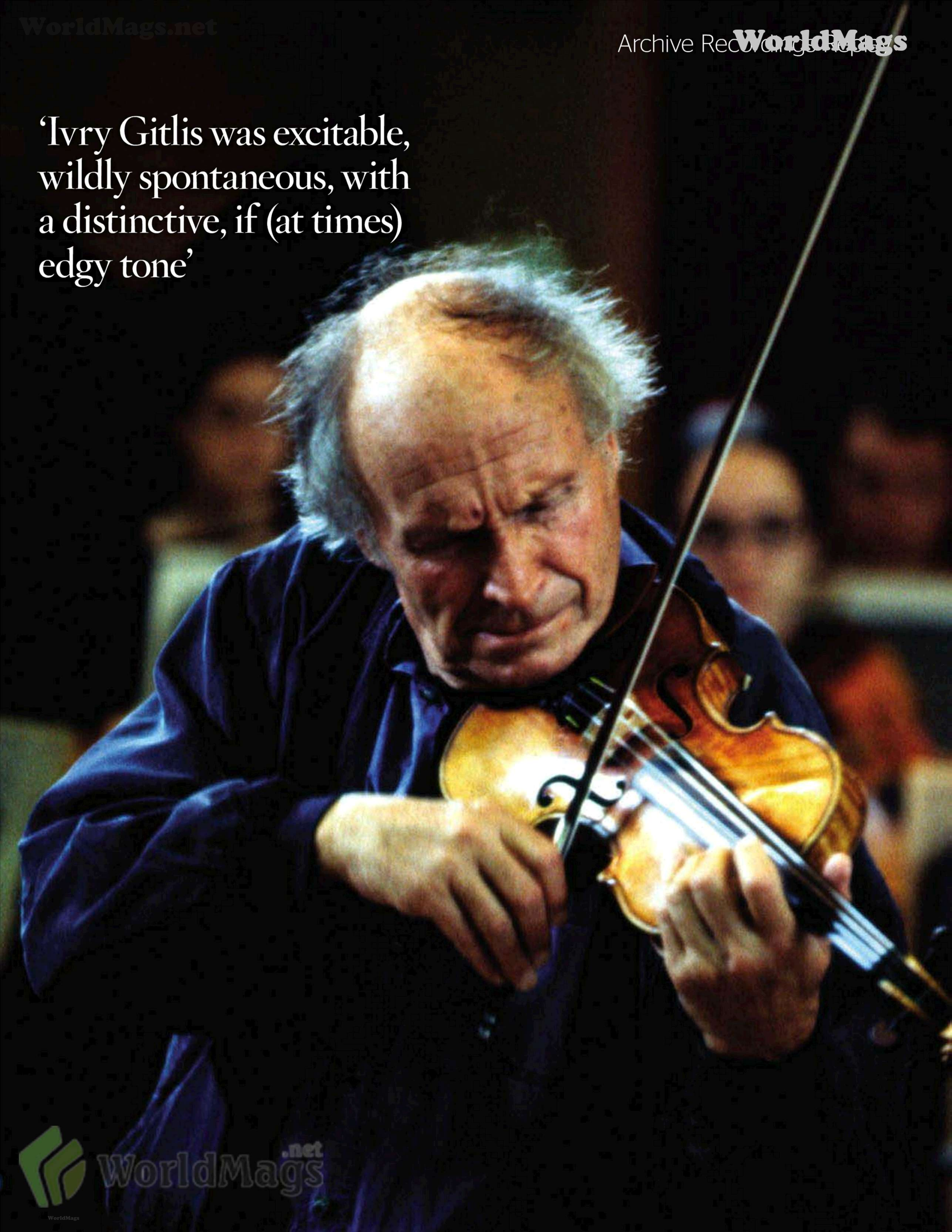
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‘Ivry Gitlis was excitable, wildly spontaneous, with a distinctive, if (at times) edgy tone’



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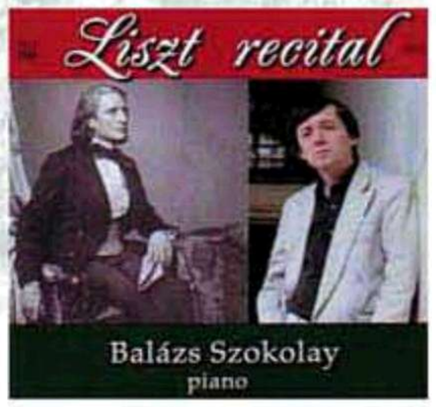
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REPLAY

Favourites and CD first-timers

Vintage orchestral gems from van Beinum's Mahler to Busch's Brahms

A brief survey of recent vintage orchestral CDs yields some gems. The recently launched Magdalen label (good transfers, intelligent annotation) has taken the admirable initiative of reissuing **Eduard van Beinum**'s unmannered but warmly communicative 1952 Decca Concertgebouw recording of Mahler's Fourth, the slow movement being an indelibly memorable highlight and with Margaret Ritchie the soprano commentator in the finale. The fill-ups are Viennese-recorded excerpts from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, with Lorna Sydney and Alfred Poell.

From Guild comes a **Memorial Tribute to Toscanini** which includes memorable performances with the NBC SO that have long enjoyed unofficial circulation – Bach's Second *Brandenburg* (1938), assertive, muscular and, in the middle movement, very much *bel canto* Bach; a fierce account of the Bach-Respighi Passacaglia and Fugue (1947); a solidly played Vivaldi Op 3 No 11 (1954); and a charmingly inflected rendition of Rossini's String Symphony No 3 in C. The second CD features rehearsal fragments of Mozart, Beethoven and Verdi with commentaries by American author and music critic Marcia Davenport. All told, the transfers are pretty good. Guild have also accessed a fine 1931 Dresden Staatskapelle Brahms Symphony No 2 under **Fritz Busch**. The vague, subfusc sound will prove hard work but it's worth the effort. The same CD includes some acoustic Busch recordings of Beethoven, Mozart and, unexpectedly, Reger (what must surely be a world-premiere recording of music from the *Mozart* Variations), as well as some post-war recordings of Mozart dances.

Archipel have been busy mining the archives for unusual broadcasts. For example, Ravel's *Bolléro* played by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under **Rudolf Kempe** in 1960, a relatively lazy affair that suddenly flares up for the home straight. Kempe and **Arthur Grumiaux** keep spirits high in the same concert in Mozart's Fifth Concerto, and the symphonic element is a fairly dark reading of Prokofiev's Seventh (where Kempe opts for the ominous, slow ending). Also from Archipel, **Pierre Monteux** and the NBC SO, a little like soft-core Toscanini in Beethoven's Seventh (1953), the coupling a vital *Emperor* Concerto with **Rudolf Serkin** and the New York Phil from 1959, with a strange edit in the first movement (13'04") and a fast, high-octane leap into the finale.

THE RECORDINGS





Mahler Sym No 4 **van Beinum**
Magdalen Ⓢ METCD8004

Various Cpsrs Tribute to Toscanini **NBC SO**
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Brahms Sym No 2 **Busch**
Guild Ⓢ GHCD2371

Mozart Vn Conc No 5 **Prokofiev** Sym No 7
Grumiaux, Kempe Archipel Ⓢ ARPCD0530

Beethoven Sym No 7. Pf Conc No 5
Serkin, Monteux Archipel Ⓢ ARPCD0532

More violin magic

Unpublished Totenberg, Ida Haendel and the tragic genius of Julian Sitkovetsky

Allan Evans's Arbiter label has usefully celebrated the Polish violinist **Roman Totenberg** (born January 1, 1911), whose slim commercial discography has never received its due. An extremely well annotated double-pack is made up of unpublished recordings, the first disc featuring sonatas by Brahms (No 3), Debussy and Bach (A minor), the second, part of Beethoven's Op 95 Quartet, with works by Copland, Dallapiccola, Webern, Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Ravel (recorded as recently as 1996). Placing Totenberg in the firmament of 20th-century violinists is difficult (I would compare him with, say, Rudolf Kolisch) but he was a significant player and one hopes that Arbiter's enterprise will prompt one or two reissues of his commercial recordings.

Another fine Polish-born violinist, **Ida Haendel**, has a more familiar profile and a more distinctive sound than Totenberg, and it has been well worth following Hänssler Classics' series of her German broadcasts with the generally reliable Hans Müller-Kray conducting. Khachaturian's likeable Concerto calls on many of Haendel's key qualities, not least her impressive technical facility, an often seductive tone (especially in the *Andante sostenuto*) and bags of energy. A pity that the stereo coupling, Bartók's Second Concerto, significantly lacks impetus and direction, especially in the first movement. Happily, there's impetus to spare on a superb coupling from Pristine Classical featuring the ill-fated **Julian Sitkovetsky** (father of Dmitry) who died in his early thirties but whose mastery of his instrument was rated second to none, especially by David Oistrakh. Sitkovetsky was at his electrifying best in Sibelius's Violin Concerto (1953, under Nikolai Anosov, father of Gennady Rozhdestvensky) and Paganini's Second Concerto (1955, under Mark Pavelman), both performances displaying a dynamic personality and spot-on intonation. As with the violinists Josef Hassid and Josef Wolfsthal, both of whom died young, one can only speculate as to how high Sitkovetsky might have flown had he lived longer. The evidence suggests very high indeed. G

THE RECORDINGS



Brahms. Debussy Vn Sons **Totenberg**
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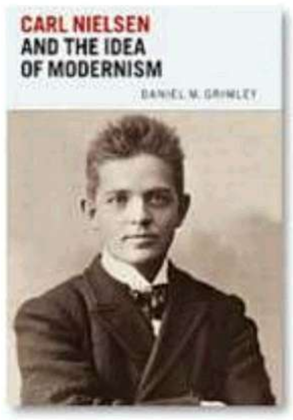
Nielsen's duality • Widor's life



Nielsen: a happy tension between hicksville and urbane modernism

Carl Nielsen

Carl Nielsen And The Idea of Modernism
By Daniel M Grimley
The Boydell Press, HB, 334pp, £50
ISBN 978-1-84383-581-3



As a hat-tip to Robert Simpson's pioneering *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist*, Daniel Grimley had intended to call this book *Carl Nielsen: Modernist*. Finding precisely the right title for your book isn't easy. (The book I'm writing has had four titles lavished upon it, and in truth, I was writing on wobbly foundations until, happy day, the title popped into my mind.) I can understand, therefore, why Grimley's original idea was dropped. *Modernist* would be a conclusion already, whereas *And The Idea of Modernism* wrenches the discussion open and gives the book places to go.

"For many writers, the terms 'modernism' and 'modernity' are effectively synonymous," Grimley muses, before dissecting both words to demonstrate why that isn't necessarily true. Modernist music that attempts to find relevance, or define a musical language "adequate of the age" as Grimley puts it, by aping other modernist models is undermining its own premise; modernism isn't a language, it's certainly not a style; and modernity is an attitude. Nielsen's music instinctively sounds "modern" to me, like a Wyndham Lewis painting or Jacob Epstein sculpture still looks bold and shamelessly provocative next to any art that retells the old narratives, even if that new art was created only last week. Nielsen, and Lewis and Epstein, weren't about giving existing forms a cosmetic shot-in-the-arm. They wanted to refashion the thing itself.

Two photographs – the first of a debonair, be-suited *homme sérieux* nonchalantly holding his panama hat, and the second a childhood snapshot of Nielsen as country bumpkin in Chaplinesque baggy clothes – take Grimley to where his argument needs to be. Nielsen spent his life making sense of that apparent disjoint: his instinctive progressive leanings set against his rural, folksy Danish upbringing. Grimley describes how childhood encounters with Beethoven and Brahms embedded universal musical values in Nielsen's small-town existence; how adding up these conflicting experiences gave him his art. This "double-man" theory is viewed within the context of Elgar and Mahler. Nothing wrong with that, but I also wondered about Ives – the *Concord* Sonata is surely an essential point of comparison for an author exploring a hick from the sticks sucking Beethoven into their orbit?

Grimley's technical analyses require intense musical literacy – if you can't read music, you're in trouble – but his musical sleuthing, especially his unpicking of how compositional traits revealed in the First Symphony blossom in later works, is forensic and detailed. The Third Symphony, he thinks, is the tipping-point towards Nielsen's mature self, especially his habit of birthing symphonies with ruptured harmonic fragments that subsequent developments knit into the structure.

Nielsen fans will find plenty to feast on but, sad to say, Grimley's stodgy writing can obscure his message. Melodic lines "rise almost imperceptibly" while the Helios Overture "literally begins in a state of timelessness" which, if you think about it, means it doesn't begin "literally" at all. In the academic circles Grimley calls home, chucking around obscure literary and philosophical reference points without explanation may be fair game. But this isn't academia and too often I was starved of information and, as I read most of the book on a long flight, there were no references sources to help. **Philip Clark**

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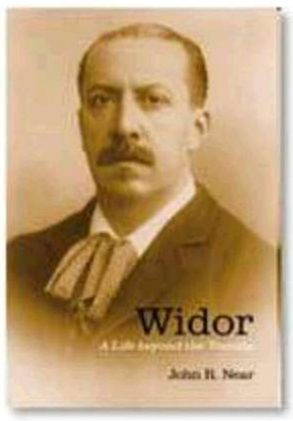
Widor

A Life beyond the Toccata

By John R Near

University of Rochester Press and Boydell & Brewer Ltd, HB, 612pp, £50

ISBN: 978-1-58046-369-0



It must be rather galling for Charles-Marie (-Jean-Albert) Widor (1844-1937) to look down from the great organ loft in the sky and see that, from his long composing career (his first work was published in 1867, his last in 1934), he is remembered by the general public for just one piece. On the other hand, he may be gratified to know that, along with Bach's spurious Toccata and Fugue in D minor, that piece is the most popular organ work of all.

Apart from a few movements from his 10 organ "symphonies" (suites in reality), most of Widor's music, the majority of which does not feature the organ and runs to 87 published opus numbers, is as unfamiliar as his career. In the 400 pages of this impressive, assiduously researched biography and a further 160 of appendices and notes, Professor Near performs the invaluable task of filling in the blanks.

In brief, Widor came from a family of organists ("I was born in an organ" he once said) of Hungarian-Alsatian descent; his mother's great-uncle was Montgolfier, inventor of the hot-air balloon. By his late teens, Widor had a high reputation and thanks to the influence of his friend, the great organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, was appointed to the prestigious post of Saint-Sulpice, Paris, in 1870, a position he held for more than 60 years until he retired in 1934. He succeeded César Franck as professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire in 1890, and was a respected critic and pedagogue. He died in 1937, and his widow survived until 1960.

What Near began as an academic project in 1982 became a labour of love for, in 1988, he was fortunate enough to experience what every biographer dreams of. He tracked down Widor's grand-niece in deepest rural France and, generous to a fault, she opened up to this American stranger the complete family archive for the first time. It was a treasure trove that included the 103-page manuscript of Widor's autobiography, letters, photographs, documents and news clippings. In Near's genial, well-paced narrative, a portrait of a highly erudite and humorous man emerges – Widor's intimate recollections of such luminaries as Rossini, Anton Rubinstein and Liszt fizz with vitality – but the book goes way "beyond the toccata" and the narrow interests of organ buffs. It is a rich source of contemporary material and provides a lively picture of Parisian musical life from the 1860s to 1937. The book, with 36 photographs, is also beautifully produced and designed. It has been high time that Widor was accorded a definitive biography – and this is it. **Jeremy Nicholas**



Three Questions for Sixty-Five Composers

By Bálint András Varga

University of Rochester Press, HB, 352pp, £25

ISBN-13: 978-1-58046-379-9



Composers in conversation can make for a rather dutiful or uninvolving read, not least when chosen for the sole purpose of bolstering a pre-determined concept developed by the author. Happily, with a guide of the perspicacity of Bálint András Varga as master of ceremonies, such a failing never arises. As the expansion of a Hungarian language volume that was first published 25 years ago, *Three Questions for Sixty-Five Composers* does exactly what its title states.

The questions themselves have been well chosen to provoke an active response without the risk of prejudicing what is said, while the actual composers form a representative cross-section that takes in several generations – ranging in seniority from Michael Tippett (born 1905) to Johannes Maria Staud (born 1974) – and is as inclusive in aesthetic terms as could be expected from a publisher working in a field that has altered dramatically (as, indeed, has music publishing itself) in the quarter century between editions.

Some readers may feel aggrieved that only three British composers (Tippett, Birtwistle and Maxwell Davies) are featured, but that was determined by the author's professional status (as agent for Editio Musica Budapest and latterly Universal Edition) and in no way reflects subjective choice on his part. Moreover, many of those included have had precious little written on them in English, which makes their contributions an invaluable complement to any recordings of their music that may have surfaced. Not least among the composers featured here are the Hungarians, underlining a new music scene comparable with those found elsewhere in Europe and whose unfamiliarity abroad is a matter of regret. Here and throughout this book, Varga is scrupulous in overall approach – his introductory paragraphs provide a welcome context, and his occasional interjections encourage the composers to elaborate on their responses rather than simply goad them into a desired response.

Among the responses from the "major" composers, that of György Kurtág represents almost the only occasion (in any language) on which he has been willing to consider his own music and its inspiration at any length; while those from such figures as Frederich Cerha, Mauricio Kagel, Helmut Lachenmann and Iannis Xenakis are as lucid an introduction to their musical preoccupations as could be hoped. Welcome, too, is the inclusion of those whose historical importance is not matched by dissemination of their music – thus Edison Denisov, Karel Goeyvaerts and Dieter Schnebel. Responses vary from the effusive to the cursory: Varga is frank in his recounting of the difficulties he had getting certain composers to respond first time around or, especially, to revise their contribution for this new edition. Indeed, evidence of the equivocation that some may have felt when being confronted with their earlier selves is, in itself, a vital aspect of the book and justification enough for the author's perseverance.

Production values are as consistently high as one expects from the University of Rochester Press, in a volume that is as well suited to dipping into as it is for sustained involvement. Not least its most appealing feature is an appendix of "Encores" that reproduces the responses of 26 composers when asked to draw their most recent music, in terms that range from the bemused to the combative and which for the most part offers an enlightening guide to their creative thinking. As a by no means incidental extra, it amply reinforces the book's utility as the most illuminating such symposium of composers cast "in their own words". Absorbing and highly pleasurable reading can be assured.

Richard Whitehouse

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Call the carabinieri

James Jolly relishes a swashbuckling Offenbach classic at the Opéra-Comique – with real chickens

Paris

WC Fields's supposed quip "Never share a stage with children or animals" clearly hasn't made it across the Channel. For the revival of Offenbach's *Les brigands* in the production by Macha Makeïeff and Jérôme Deschamps at the Opéra-Comique in Paris, not only was there a donkey and a dog (with decidedly diva-ish tendencies) on stage but also a quartet of consummately professional chickens (their *sang-froid* was such that they remained completely unfazed during the crowd scenes – though apparently on opening night a pair of them did end up in the pit). The spirit of pantomime did indeed hang over the evening and the Salle Favart was the perfect venue for the production both in scale and intimacy (amazing to think it was unveiled back in 1993 on the vast stage of the Opéra-Bastille).The very period set seemed tailor-made for this enchanting venue and, in many ways, *Les brigands* was coming home as it was a staple of the Opéra-Comique repertoire for many years.

To an Englishman there are unmistakable echoes (or rather pre-echoes) of G&S's *The Pirates of Penzance* (not for nothing was the first English translation of the piece made by W S Gilbert, and he clearly borrowed quite a few situations from his French contemporary). I'm not sure whether an Italian would immediately draw a parallel with Verdi's *I masnadieri*, but both that opera and the Offenbach draw their inspiration – albeit rather differently – from the same Schiller play, *Die Räuber*.

The plot is pure hokum, but the music is enchanting and has enough stand-out numbers to give everyone a chance to shine, and the all-French cast (the chorus hailed from Toulon) did a splendid job. Musically, the most interesting element of the evening was the orchestra, François-Xavier Roth's very fine period-instrument ensemble Les Siècles. He'd adopted an orchestral layout that was standard in the 19th century (you can see it in a number of Edgar Degas's paintings of musicians in the orchestra pit): basically the players are rotated 180 degrees so the violins are at the back, just below the stage, and the brass and winds nearer the audience. The conductor stands in the middle, so is in much closer visual contact with the singers and very visible to the audience. I'm not sure it made a huge difference to the sound but it certainly made the conductor more of a conduit or communicator between pit and stage than is usual. Les Siècles, which Roth founded in 2003, is a flexible ensemble which plays in a style, and on instruments, appropriate to the repertoire of the moment: for a French piece from the middle of the 19th century the most notable feature was the winds, though the strings had a nice bite, a keen sense of attack and a use of vibrato that is slightly more restrained than you'd get from a 'modern' symphony orchestra.

The cast were without a weak link and revealed some fine comic acting (the Spanish contingent were very funny – racial stereotyping is clearly alive and well in the French capital!). Vocally, one of the loveliest voices belonged to the mezzo Julie Boulianne in the trouser role of Fragoletto, but his inamorata Fiorella, Daphné Touchais, spun off her pyrotechnics with great style. *Les brigands* may not be much performed these days (John Eliot Gardiner gave us a still glorious recording from Lyon about 20 years ago), but it still has enormous charm. And it gave the French a new expression to use when someone turned up late – instead of "arriver en retard", Offenbach and his librettists Meilhac and Halévy gave them "arriver comme les carabinieri" ("turn up like the carabinieri")!

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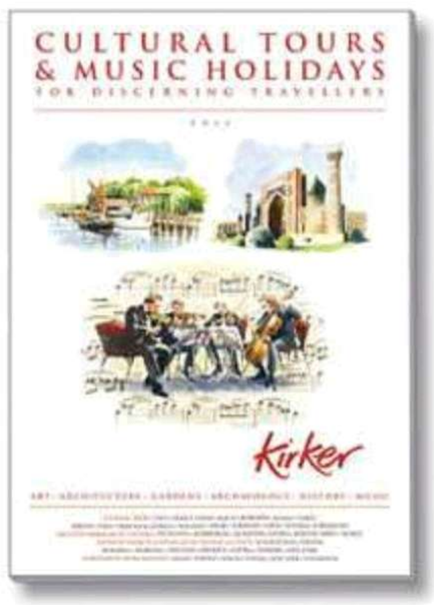


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Measasha Brueggergosman and Michael Maniaci on the Opera Atelier stage

Opera Atelier takes on the Met and wins, reports **Olivia Giovetti**

Toronto

I happened to attend Opera Atelier's *La Clemenza di Tito* the day after I caught the opening night of the Metropolitan Opera's shiny new *Die Walküre*. And while the two companies are very different, it is striking to compare the latter, a technologically sophisticated but clearly under-rehearsed production, with the former, a back-to-basics set which amplified every meticulously rehearsed yet no less spontaneous detail, luxuriously cast with Measha Brueggergosman and Michael Maniaci in the lead roles.

Opera Atelier makes effective use of its in-house *corps de ballet*, yet artistic directors Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg also demand of their singers a physicality that is wholly in tune with the music. It's not a director's interpretation of what the opera should be, rather an organic response to the composer's vision. Equally salient is that this production marks the first time in North America that *Clemenza* has been played on period instruments.

Founded six years after William Christie created Les Arts Florissants and six years before Christophe Rousset founded Les Talens Lyriques, Opera Atelier lies at the heart of the late 20th-century Baroque resurgence. Moreover, the twice-annual productions of this comparatively small company have yielded some major premieres in Canada and North America. Other Canadian companies have followed suit, but the feisty Opera Atelier remains the lifeblood of Canada's Baroque scene, presenting operas not only in a period aesthetic but also a modern frame of storytelling.

For such rare operatic gems, one would expect a company to plunge full-force into marketing and public relations. However, Pynkoski and Zingg prefer to channel their resources into luxuriously extended rehearsal periods. "Our advertising budget is suicidal for an opera like this," Pynkoski jokes. Yet the extensive rehearsal time is embraced by the singers. "I will never be 'plugged' into a production," says Brueggergosman. "That's a disservice to both the audience and the artist." Her co-star agreees. "We're given the chance to trust each other and explore," says Maniaci, who makes Opera Atelier a frequent stop on his packed tour schedule.

The risks of long rehearsals and limited advertising budget pay off: the night before Easter Sunday the Elgin Theatre's 1500 seats are nearly sold out. Has Opera Atelier found the secret to an artistically and fiscally lucrative company by attracting the artists that attract audiences? After all, the cost of technology rises and falls, but you can't put a price on time.

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Dominique Labelle and Drew Minter have fun with *Teseo*

Tim Woodall uncovers a feast of the Baroque at the German centre of the Handel revival

Göttingen

Handel's early opera *Teseo* was premiered in a Haymarket theatre in 1713. It was not performed again until 1947, when it was dusted off by the Göttingen Handel Festival, a neat example of the impact this picturesque central-German university town has had on the Handel revival.

Founded in 1920, Göttingen hosts the oldest early-music gathering in the world. British conductor Nicholas McGegan, in his last festival at the helm after 21 years, programmed *Teseo* as part of the 2011 theme, "Vive le Baroque", exploring Handel's French influences. McGegan leaves a strong legacy. He brought back the yearly staged opera that forms the backbone of a festival that now runs at 90 events over 12 days. As he says: "When I came, it was really a long weekend."

The *Teseo* production, hosted in the intimate Deutsches Theatre, benefited from another McGegan innovation, the festival orchestra he formed in 2006. The ensemble was at the centre of a traditional baroque production that put the music centre-stage (except at the climax, when stage director Catherine Turocy had some fun with a swooping virtual dragon).

On stage, the dancers of Turocy's New York Baroque Dance Company added flavour to an otherwise subtle directing hand. Turocy wasn't afraid to ham up the plot's silly moments and the surtitles screen streamed backstage film and social media updates. Dominique Labelle as the sorceress Medea was the strongest of a solid cast, producing a richly controlled performance.

But the finest singing of the opening weekend came the next evening, when soprano Ruby Hughes joined McGegan's successor in Göttingen, Laurence Cummings, and his London Handel Players for a programme of cantatas and instrumental music. The haughty gaze of the Hanoverian Kings (George II founded Göttingen university) – whose portraits hang behind the stage in the university's main hall – and a tremendous thunderstorm provided a dramatic backdrop for Hughes's sensuous performance of Rameau and Clérambault.

Looking ahead to his new role, Cummings is very aware of the importance of Handel to Göttingen. "It's exciting to be part of an institution that has brought Handel back into the consciousness of the musical world," he says.

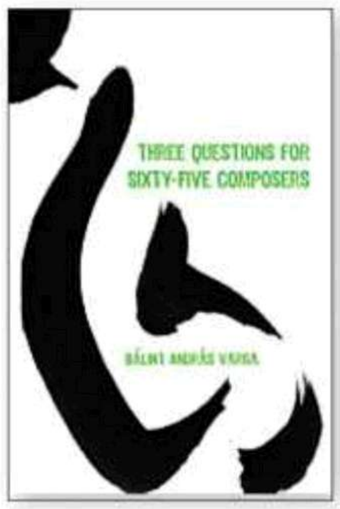
Further highlights from Göttingen must include one of the town's fine churches. A late evening concert by recorder-led chamber ensemble Voices of Music presented sumptuous music from the Court of Versailles in candle-lit reflection.

PHOTOGRAPHY: MANUEL FISCHER, BRUCE ZINGER, ALCIRO THEODORO DA SILVA

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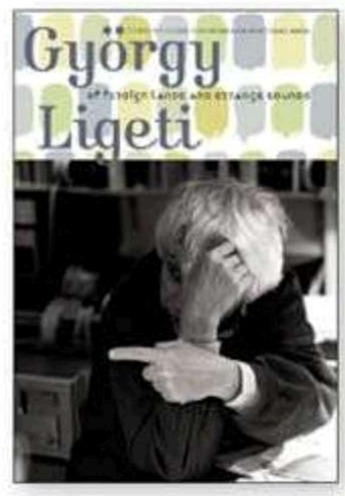
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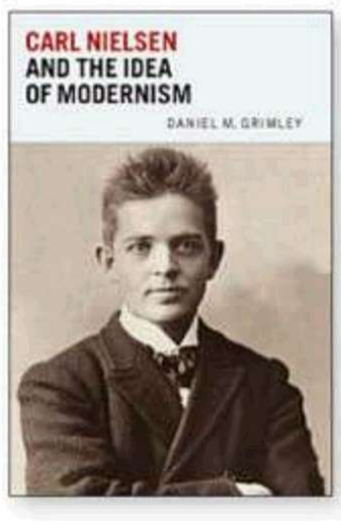
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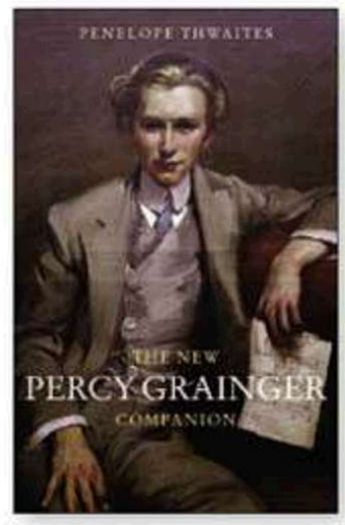
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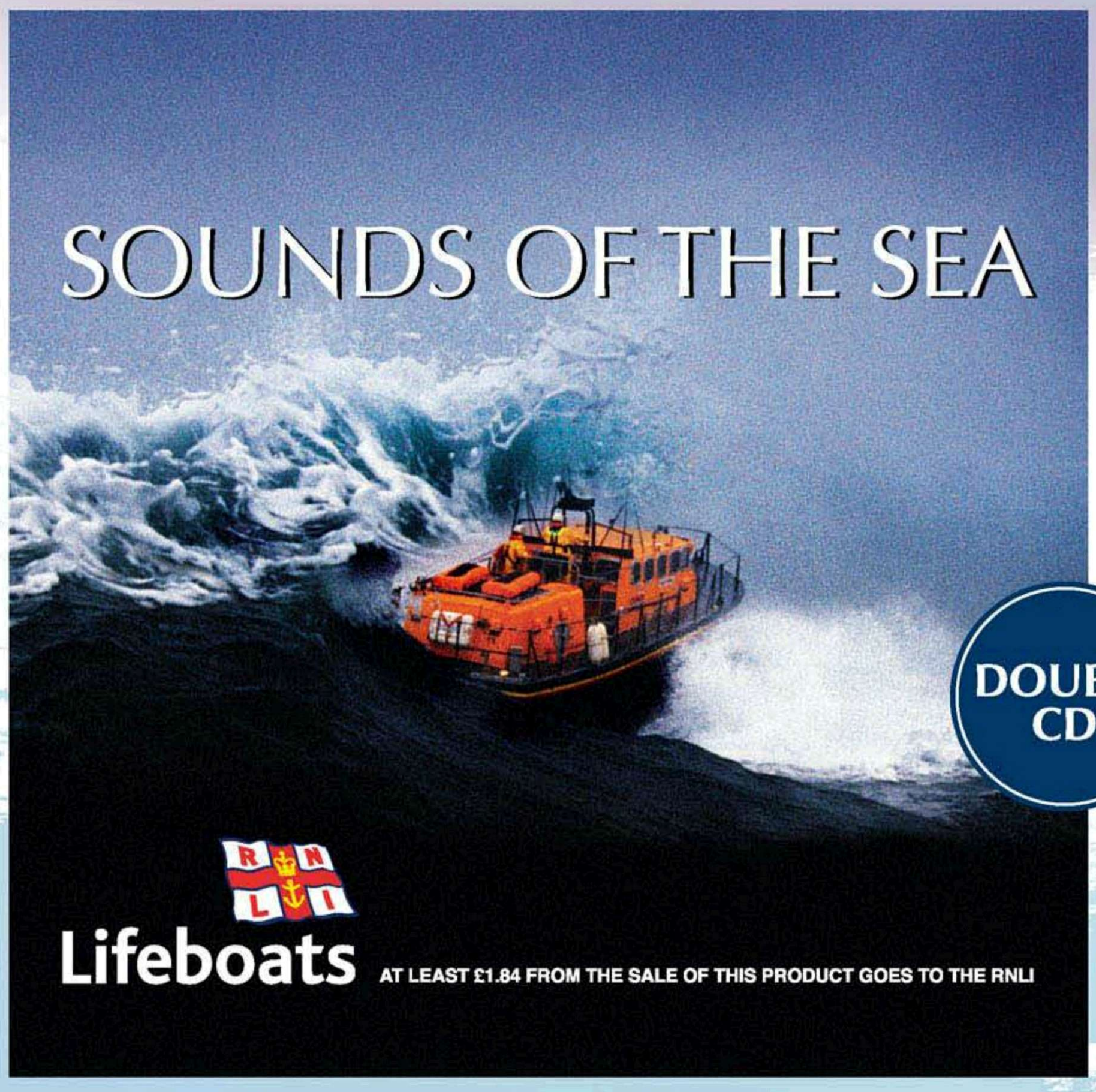
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The Best Events Worldwide

Polenzani in Chicago • Hilliard Ensemble at the Canterbury Festival • Lulu at Paris National Opera • Benedetti at the Malcolm Arnold Festival • Pavel Haas Quartet in Glasgow

01 October

Chicago, Civic Opera House

Lyric Opera of Chicago launches its 57th season with Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* conducted by Emmanuel Villaume and starring Matthew Polenzani in the title-role on October 1, 5, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24 and 29. Details: +1 312 332 2244 / **www.lyricopera.org**

02 October

Liverpool, St George's Hall

Harry Bicket conducts the English Concert in a gala performance of Purcell, Bach and Vivaldi with guest soprano Helen Massey. Details: +44 0151 709 3789 / **www.stgeorgesliverpool.co.uk**

02 October

Luxembourg, Philharmonie

The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Daniel Harding perform Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony and Grieg's Piano Concerto with soloist Lang Lang. Details: +352 26 32 26 32 / **www.philharmonie.lu**



Matthew Polenzani: stars in The Tales of Hoffmann in Chicago

06 October

Suffolk, William Alwyn Festival

The William Alwyn Festival runs from October 6 to 9 and includes Alwyn's Oboe Concerto with soloist Richard Simpson, plus performances of the First Concerto Grosso, String Quartet, Dramatic Overture: *The Moor of Venice*, *Seascapes* and *Tragic Interlude*. Details: +44 (0)1728 687 110 / **www.musicweb-international.com/alwyn**

13 October

São Paulo, Sala São Paulo

Vasily Petrenko conducts the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 2 with soloist Maria João Pires on October 13, 14 and 15. Details: +55 11 3223 3966 / **www.osesp.art.br**

15 October

New York, Carnegie Hall

Pianist Rosa Antonelli performs works by Albéniz, Ginastera, Granados, Guastavino and Ugarte, plus world-premiere piano arrangements of Piazzolla's *Our World* and *Imperial* tangos. Details: +1 212 247 7800 / **www.carnegiehall.org**

15 October

Canterbury, Festival

The Canterbury Festival runs from October 15 to 29, featuring more than 200 music, theatre, dance, comedy and visual arts events. Highlights of the classical programme include the Hilliard Ensemble in Canterbury Cathedral, the Trondheim Soloists, and pianist Lucy Parham joined by actors Harriet Walter and Martin Jarvis in a Liszt 200th anniversary celebration. Details: +44 (0)1227 787787 / **www.canterburyfestival.co.uk**

18 October

Paris, Opéra Bastille

Paris National Opera presents Berg's *Lulu* conducted by Michael Schonwandt and starring Laura Aikin in the title-role on October 18, 21, 24 and 28, and November 2 and 5. Details: +33 8 9289 9090 / **www.operadeparis.fr**

19 October

Toronto, Roy Thomson Hall

Stéphane Denève conducts the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in Stravinsky's *Dumbarton Oaks*, Rachmaninov's Symphony No 2 and Mozart's Piano Concerto No 16 with soloist Lars Vogt. Details: +1 416 598 3375 / **www.tso.ca**

21 October

London, Wigmore Hall

Pianist Di Xiao performs Beethoven's *Moonlight* Sonata, Chopin's Ballade No 4, Ravel's *Miroirs*, a selection of Messiaen's Preludes, and two Chinese moon songs. Details: +44 (0)20 7935 2141 / **www.wigmore-hall.org.uk**

21 October

Northampton, Royal and Derngate

The Malcolm Arnold Festival runs from October 21 to 23 and features all nine of Arnold's symphonies performed by eight orchestras. Nicola Benedetti also appears in Brahms's Double Concerto. Details: +44 01604 624 811 / **www.malcolmarnoldfestival.com**

21 October

Wexford, Opera House

Wexford Festival Opera's 60th season runs from October 21 to November 5, featuring three main productions: Ambroise Thomas's *La cour de Célimène* starring Claudia Boyle; Roman Statkowski's *Maria* starring Daria Masiero; and Donizetti's *Gianni di Parigi* starring Suzanna Markova. Details: +353 53 91 22 144 / **www.wexfordopera.com**

23 October

Glasgow, City Halls

City Halls artist-in-residence, the Pavel Haas Quartet, present A Portrait of Dvořák joined by piano duo Simon Crawford-Phillips and Philip Moore. The programme includes a selection of the composer's *Slavonic Dances*, and String Quartets, Opp 96 and 97. Details: +44 (0)141 353 8000 / **www.glasgowconcerthalls.com**

28 October

Northumberland, Music Festival

The Northumberland Music Festival runs from October 28 to November 6 and includes Gala Opera and Gilbert & Sullivan concerts conducted by Robin Newton, plus appearances from Polyphonic Brass and the Kingsmead String Quartet. Details: +44 (0)1668 283 100 / **www.nmfestival.com**

28 October

Phoenix (Mauritius), J&J Auditorium

The Mauritius Opera Festival, running from October 28 to November 11, presents Verdi's *La traviata*, a co-production with Cape Town Opera starring soprano Véronique Zuël-Bungaroo, tenor Francesco Petrozzi and baritone Michael Kraus. Performances feature choirs from the Indian Ocean and the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra. Details: +230 466 9988 / **www.operamauritius.com**



Pavel Haas: Dvořák in Glasgow

PHOTOGRAPHY: KEN HOWARD/METROPOLITAN OPERA; MARCOBORGGREVE

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Tune Surfing

James Jolly on the big players of the downloading scene, a revisit to emusic and Glyndebourne



emusic: recent delights on offer

A mid-year Nielsen report on record sales revealed a rise in the first half of 2011 – the first since 2004. The reason? Downloads are finally making their presence felt on the bottom line: an 11 per cent increase in digital downloads was the major contributing factor. If you look at the major players in the digital market – based on the sales of Naxos recordings (the best-selling classical label) – the stand-out digital store remains iTunes, launched in 2003 and regularly visited by 225 million people worldwide. It sells more Naxos recordings than all other DSPs (Digital Service Providers, aka online stores) put together. Chart that on a graph, and iTunes' dominant position is jaw-dropping. Combine it with Apple's staggering iPhone and iPad success and it's little surprise that, in July, the company had more cash to spend that the US government!

Second position in the online classical music market belongs, not surprisingly, to the **Naxos Music Library**, a streaming service that has, cleverly, tapped deep into the musical education world (quite how deep came home to me when I visited one of Tokyo's major music colleges and saw three terminals in its library all logged onto the Naxos Music Library). For an annual subscription you can listen to a staggering amount of music from a vast number of labels.

The next positions are occupied by **Amazon's** digital store, and by Naxos's downloading site **Classicsonline** (which also offers a streaming service for a monthly fee). The site that nipped at iTunes' heels for many years comes next: **emusic** has changed its model slightly since its launch and for a monthly subscription you can download as much as your allowance permits. Then two further streaming sites: **Rhapsody** and **Napster**, neither particularly focused on classical music, but both offering a pretty head-spinning selection for your monthly sub.

Next, **Spotify**, a site that I'll wager will feature much higher in the list when next year's survey is taken. It's another streaming site, but its style, ease of use and hugely impressive catalogue have made it very popular in Europe (it has just launched in the US and I'm sure will take off in spectacular style). It's a great way to sample music but it's also becoming the default way to listen: most major companies are represented as well as plenty of indies, so there isn't much you won't find. A thread of the Forum on the *Gramophone* website recently revealed that Spotify has become a central part of the lives of a number of diehard classical music fans – much to their surprise.

Mention of emusic demands a quick update of the site since I've not mentioned it for a while. Things have changed – the subscription allowing you a certain number of tracks has been replaced by a simple monthly allowance (packages range from £5.99, to £9.99, £13.99, £17.99 and £24.99 – and the more you spend, the larger the bonus. So buy the £24.99 package and you'll be given £27.99 to spend). A word of warning: your subscription doesn't roll over from month to month, so be sure to use your allowance or you'll be throwing money away.

One regrettable "innovation" on the site has been borrowed from iTunes, namely making certain tracks within a set "album only". An example is the *Gramophone* Award-winning Chandos set of the Bax symphonies from the BBC Philharmonic under Vernon Handley: you can buy the entire set, but can't access individual works, and only three tracks can be extracted. It's really rather unhelpful. That said, the entire set – seven symphonies plus a detailed interview between Handley and

The essential download playlist No 38 Glyndebourne

Cavalli La calisto **Leppard** (Decca) iT, Am, S
Dvořák Rusalka **Bělohlávek** (Glyndebourne) iT, Am
Mozart Le nozze di Figaro **Gui** (EMI) iT, Am, S
Mozart Don Giovanni **F Busch** (Naxos) iT, Am
Mozart Così fan tutte **Haitink** (EMI) iT, CS, CO, Am, S
Gluck Orfeo ed Euridice **Stiedry** (Dutton) iT, Am, CS, CO, S
Mozart Idomeneo **Pritchard** (Glyndebourne) iT, Am
Rossini Le comte Ory **Gui** (Walhall) iT, Am, Ar, CS, CO, S
Rossini La cenerentola **Gui** (EMI) iT, Am, Ar, em, S
The Very Best of Glyndebourne on Record Various (EMI) iT, Am, S

A = Ariama Am = Amazon CO = Classicsonline CS = Classicalshop em = emusic iT = iTunes S = Spotify (not available in all territories)

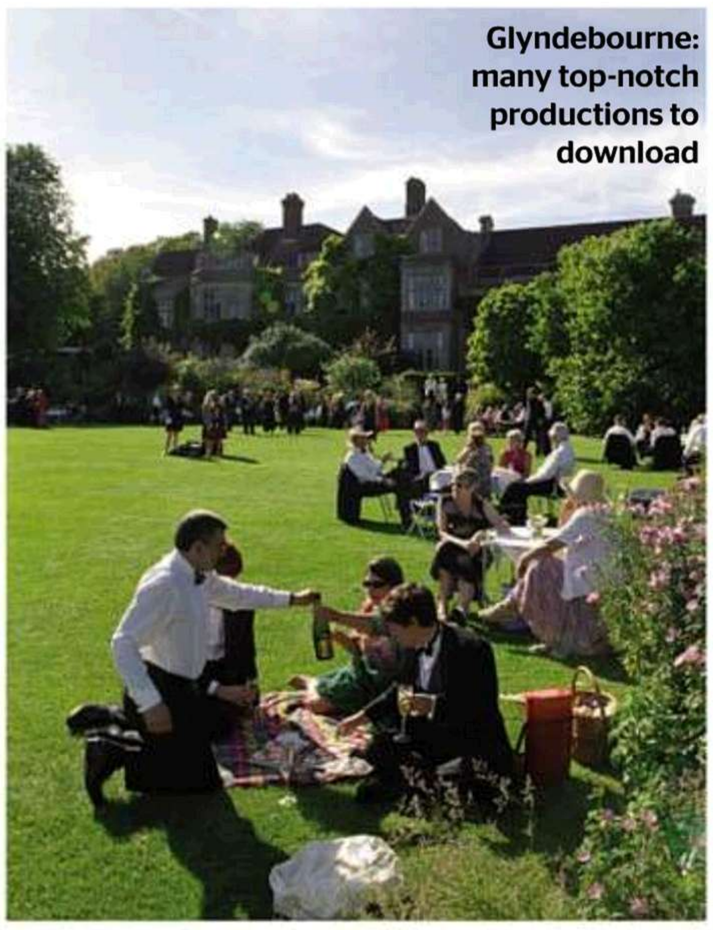
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Andrew McGregor – will set you back £13.86 (compared with Amazon's £13.98, Chandos's own £23.97 in the **classicalshop.net**, or iTunes' £39.99). And when it comes to out-of-copyright material such as the Karajan Philharmonia Beethoven symphonies (ex-EMI) – which are pretty widely available – it does seem absurd to shut off certain symphonies (you can buy the whole set for £15.54 but only Nos 1, 5 and 8 individually, which seems rather arbitrary).

The great strength of emusic is the wonderfully eclectic offering from independent companies big and small – and that fuels feelings of serendipity as you scroll through the newly ripped recordings. Recent delights, for me, have included the Ernest Ansermet set of Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (84p!), a vivid album of Gossec symphonies played by Concerto Köln (£5.80), the Zemlinsky *Lyric Symphony* conducted by Christoph Eschenbach with Matthias Goerne and Christine Schäfer (£2.94) and an ear-opening collection of rarely encountered works by Ernest Bloch – the *Poems of the Sea*, the Violin Concerto and *Voice in the Wilderness* (a cello concerto in all but name, £5.04). The day I was exploring the site there was a vast influx of recordings from the German Capriccio label – and for lovers of the unusual, it's splendidly rewarding.



Glyndebourne: many top-notch productions to download

PHOTOGRAPHY: MIKE HOBAN, PASCAL VICTOR/ARTCOMART

Glyndebourne has had a strong season this year, so as things limber up for the touring season, I've devoted my download list to some famous Glyndebourne productions. Included are Pavarotti's Idamante (to Richard Lewis's Idomeneo and Gundula Janowitz's Ilia), the famous Kathleen Ferrier *Orfeo*, Janet Baker's glorious Calisto and a clutch of discs celebrating the art of Vittorio Gui. And I've added the EMI "Very Best" set which contains other gems. G

BLOGWATCH

gramophone.co.uk/blog



Natalie Dessay: shattering as Violetta

James Inverne is transfixed by Natalie Dessay's first European Violetta, in Aix-en-Provence – and hopes for a recording.

Aix festival director Bernard Foccroulle spoke of the event being about making connections between art forms, as between the past and the present. All of which was clearly in evidence in this stunning production of Verdi's *La traviata*

Yesterday morning a visit to the local Musée Granet here had yielded an insight into the vision of the great art collector Jean Planque – who had come to realise how, with some artists, one shouldn't look too specifically at the details or even think too literally. One should instead find the music in the textures. So it was with Jean-Francois Sivadier's staging of the Verdi.

A play-within-a-play framing might sound old hat, but we were in the dangerous world of Pirandello here, where staged action can suddenly become real for the performers and the line between fiction and truth is knife-edge thin. So there were stage managers and lots of arranging of sets and so on. But there were broad subtexts (for some a dread word, I know, but it worked). The stage positions, the backdrops, these seemed all to be about public image – very effective for instance in the sunny blue-sky cloths that hung above Alfredo's house in the second act, or when in the first Violetta suddenly broke free of her "scene" and marched to the "backstage" tables at the rear of the stage to down almost half a bottle of vodka. At her death, the company watched from the side, shocked yet rooted to the spot.

For Natalie Dessay's Violetta, I can only say that I doubt there has ever been a singer in this role (even Callas, whom I never saw) who was more shattering. She moved with an animal abandon yet a desperation for physical contact, whether rolling her head along Alfredo's arm or forcing herself into his father's embrace. Then, at the end, her energy totally left her as her Marilyn Monroe wig and stage make-up were removed for her and she was left, with barely the will to shake her head at a glass of water, spent. That her light, supple voice is not really one of nature's Violettas is in this rare case wholly irrelevant. She made it work.

Alongside her, Charles Castronovo was an ardent Alfredo, Ludovic Tézier a too young-looking but authoritive-sounding Germont. There was an attention-grabbing voice among the smaller roles too, in Andrea Mastroni's Marchese. Watch out for him.

The London Symphony Orchestra were on top form, blending exquisite detail with true operatic punch. Their conductor Louis Langrée, in apparently his first Verdi opera, found darkness in the score without sacrificing elegance. A magnificent evening. Oh, and there's a good chance Virgin Classics will issue it on DVD, so watch this space.

The Gramophone Player

Gramophone's online media Player features a huge amount of music for you to stream, including longer excerpts from the monthly Editor's Choice recordings, in-vision excerpts of DVD recommendations, works related to one of the magazine's features and a newly remastered recording from the archives – and all for free! **www.gramophone.co.uk**

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High Fidelity

News and reviews of the latest in audio, home cinema and new technology

Pro-ject and Rega boost vinyl with new turntables

There may be plenty of talk about moving on from CDs to network and internet streaming of music, but the fact is that vinyl LPs are still going strong – and two of the biggest names in turntable manufacture have just launched new affordable models.

New from Pro-ject, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, is its latest entry-level model, the Debut S/E3. Selling for £250 complete with arm and cartridge, the latest Debut model has the same Piano Black gloss finish seen on the company's high-end turntables, a new 12in platter in place of the 10in version on the original Debut III, and improved bearings in the tone arm. It also now carries a pre-fitted Ortofon Super OM10 cartridge in place of the lesser OM5e used in the standard Debut.

The motor has been upgraded, too, and has a new suspension system to decouple it from the plinth, while a round-section belt is now fitted, again to reduce the transmission of noise from motor to sub-platter. Finally, a junction box on the underside of the plinth is used instead of the more common captive tone arm cabling, allowing buyers to upgrade their turntable interconnects if required.

Meanwhile, Rega has announced the RP3, which replaces the popular P3-23, itself a development of the long-running Planar 3. It has a new hand-assembled RB303 tone arm, precision main bearing and a low-vibration, low-noise motor assembly. The RB303 builds on the design of the celebrated RB300 and features a brand-new tube providing reduced resonance and extreme stability. A lightweight, rigid plinth again minimises resonances, so avoiding distortion. As Rega says: "Mass absorbs energy – lost energy equals lost music."

Available in titanium, white or "cool grey", the RP3 retails for £475, or £549 pre-fitted with the company's Elys 2 cartridge.

Pro-ject: Henley Designs
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Rega Research
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Onkyo adds network-streaming 3D Blu-ray player

Just added to the extensive Onkyo home cinema range is the BD-SP809, a £500 Blu-ray player complete with 3D capability, network multimedia streaming and THX certification.

It has twin HDMI outputs and, as well as Blu-ray discs, DVD-Video and CD, can play DivX HD, MP3 and WMA content on CD and DVD, and also has a USB port to allow playback of audio and video files from a suitable device. Network streaming is supported via the player's Ethernet port, and it can deliver video, music and photos stored on any DLNA 1.5-certified server.

The BD-SP809 has separate blocks for video and audio circuitry, and also has component and composite video outputs, optical and electrical digital outs, stereo audio out and infrared and RS232 control connections.

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COMING SOON

SIMPLE AUDIO'S STREAMING SOLUTION

On the way this autumn is a complete streaming music solution from a new British company, Simple Audio. It uses PowerLine AV Ethernet links between zones to distribute music over your household mains electricity wiring.

The company says this ensures a more robust connection, allowing the system to handle 24-bit audio files, and that it supports MP3, AIFF, WAV, FLAC and Apple Lossless Audio. The player will start from around £650 and will also feature line in/out and digital sockets, USB and outputs for a subwoofer and headphones. Control will be through a colour touchscreen.

AUDYSSEY DESKTOP AUDIO

Having already launched its South of Market iPod system, US company Audyssey is all set to release its Lower East Side desktop speakers in Europe. The company claims to offer a full, rich sound from very small speakers using Smart Speaker digital processing.

The speakers have digital optical and analogue inputs, stand 23.5cm tall and have an automatic standby mode to save power. They've been launched in the USA at $199 a pair; European pricing is yet to be announced.

Audio Pro launches easier wireless solution



New from Swedish company Audio Pro is the WF100 wireless music system, which connects computers to audio systems for wireless music. The £150 system comprises transmitter and receiver, and a variety of configurations take music from a USB to an amplifier or system, or simply connect two music components wirelessly.

It operates on a dedicated wireless network and can support multiple receivers on a single transmitter or three separate music networks in the same home. The system will transmit music of up to CD quality.

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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

Life beyond the CD standard

It's almost ancient technology, so how does audio progress when CD limitations are ignored? asks **Andrew Everard**

Time passes, and we're now further away from the launch of the CD than that format was from the arrival of the stereo LP. Just over 20 years after the arrival of two-channel long-playing records, the first CD players were demonstrated, yet now, more than 30 years on from Philips' earliest public airings of its fledgling format, and just short of three decades since the first player hit the shops on October 1, 1982, the world is still listening to CDs.

Our mainstream music technology has been frozen in time and is still using sampling-rate and bit-depth parameters that weren't even state-of-the-art in the 1980s. It's hard to imagine where we'd be if our computers, say, or other domestic appliances were still using technology unchanged for the past 30 years.

Back then, computers with the graphical user interfaces we all use today were unheard of, you were lucky if you had 128k of memory to play with, and hard disks were a thing of the future: storage was on floppy disks or, more often, cassette tape. One of IBM's first personal computers cost the equivalent of about £2500 today, whereas you can now buy a netbook with a fast processor, 2GB of RAM and 160GB of built-in storage, plus many more advances, for less than £200.

Of course, there have been attempts to move the CD on from what was, at the time of its development, more a technology choice of convenience than the absolute best the technology of the time could offer. We've had HDCD, Pacific Microsonics' technology to cram more resolution on to a CD, and of course technologies based on the DVD format, such as DVD-Audio, which hasn't stood the test of time, and Super Audio CD. While SACD hasn't gone on to be the replacement for the CD it was hoped to be by some (not least those who saw their compact disc licensing revenues heading south), it's well established with many listeners, especially those in market sectors such as jazz and, of course, classical music.

However, there are opportunities for higher-resolution audio to become the norm and, slightly perversely, they come from exactly the technology once considered to be threatening both the future of CD and any chance of further sound quality improvements.

For a while, computer-stored music was thought to be the final nail in the coffin of further audio developments, as many asked whether there was any point trying to develop higher-resolution carriers when "young people today" seemed more concerned with fast downloads and the ability to carry an entire music collection in their pockets. MP3 files of 128kbps, however nasty they sounded when played on high-quality equipment, seemed to be the future. Now, however, that same model of downloading music, storing it on a computer and playing it into a hi-fi system seems to be opening the way to audio formats that are far beyond what can be stored on a CD.

Many more "points of information" for each millisecond of sound are offered by 24-bit audio, sampled at 88.2kHz or 96kHz, than are available on CD's 16-bit technology, and that's only half the story. Content is now being made available at 176.2kHz/24-bit or 192kHz/24-bit by some enterprising labels, and up in the audio stratosphere there's even some 384kHz music out there, although it's mainly limited to sampler-type material.

What's more, the equipment is available to play all this music: most streaming clients seen in these pages in recent months can handle "96/24" and a few are ready for "192/24" content, including the Linn DS range and the Musical Fidelity M1CLiC due to appear in these pages next month.

As the number of players available increases, so surely will the range of music files available to play on them, finally allowing those of us interested in higher-quality audio to move on from the limitations of a format formulated getting on for 40 years ago.



Infidelities *Andrew Everard*

CD isn't dead – now it's just one option

"Yes, but can I still play my CDs?" That was the worried question from one reader who mailed me the other day to ask about transferring all his music to network storage. He was keen to get all his music in a central store that he could access around the house but he was concerned that CD players were going the way of the wax cylinder and, as he put it, "I'll never again have the pleasure of browsing along a shelf, pulling out a disc and popping it in the player".

Of course, with his collection stored on a server, he could browse a virtual shelf whenever he wants; but I get his point and completely understand the appeal of being able to drop a newly bought disc straight into a player as soon as you get it home, whether it arrives it in a shopping bag or through the letterbox.

CD players really aren't going anywhere – or, more precisely, *still* really aren't going anywhere: I was pleased, at a recent launch event, to discover that the most top-secret products were the replacements for a well-established CD player/amplifier pair, due in the shops around now. They were top-secret purely because the models they replace continue to sell extremely well.

Of course, many may now be playing CDs on multifunction DVD or Blu-ray players, but the fact there's still room for dedicated stereo CD players, and at the sensible end of the market, can't be anything but good news for music lovers with extensive collections. There may be a lot of fuss at the moment about music storage and streaming – and I hold my hand up to being very excited about that – but I'd seriously miss my many shelves of CDs were they to vanish.



Andrew Everard
Audio Editor

'The most top-secret products included a new CD player'

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CAMBRIDGE AUDIO SONATA NP30

Affordable music-streaming solution has plenty to offer

Cambridge Audio took its time getting this one right. **Andrew Everard** decides whether it was worth the wait

As you might have read in my recent coverage of the 2011 High End Show, held back in May in Munich, Cambridge Audio has finally launched its NP30 network player. Part of the company's compact Sonata hi-fi range, it was first shown at the 2010 show, and at the time was one of a very select band of devices of its kind.

In fact, so few "internet tuners" of this kind were then on sale that I was keen to get my hands on an NP30 for review. "No dice" was the answer at the time: the unit wasn't due in the shops until October last year, in time for the peak selling period before Christmas, so I'd have to wait until then for a sample.

October and then Christmas came and went but I wasn't entirely concerned: after all, Cambridge Audio wouldn't be the only British hi-fi company to encounter some slippage in its product launch schedule, and as technology becomes more advanced – for which read complex – predicted launch dates all too often seem as much wishful thinking as firm commitments.

That's part of the modern audio and home cinema world as much as the niggling problems many encounter with brand-new products, which are, however, inevitably designed to be sorted with a rapid firmware update. I've commented in these pages before about the new role of early adopters of technology being unofficial "beta testers": several products out there have only really got it right after several such updates, having been out "in the wild" for at least a year. The Cambridge Audio Sonata NP30 may be rather later into the shops – in the UK, Richer Sounds shops – than intended, but the company has done proper beta testing on this unit, putting a number of samples out to consumers for use and receiving back reports of user experiences and foibles. And so, a further year down the line, the NP30 is at last on sale, thoroughly tested and sorted and, at £400, the least expensive hi-fi internet streaming client on the market.

It's also one of the simplest, lacking a conventional radio tuner or any kind of amplification: it's designed to be used with the £300 Sonata DR30+ stereo receiver, and perhaps the £150 CD30v2 CD player.

However, at the price, the NP30 could also be attractive to owners of hi-fi systems of other brands wanting a network solution and is perfectly compatible in that context: it has conventional stereo line outputs and both optical and electrical digital outs, and can be operated using the remote handset supplied or, over a network, the Cambridge Audio UuVol Remote, a free download that can be run on iPhones, iPod Touch or iPads.

UuVol is also the name of the web interface for the unit's internet radio system: rather like other companies' systems, this allows you to choose internet stations from a range of search fields (location, genre and so on) as presets, or add stations from known web addresses. To link the web interface and the NP30 once it's connected to the internet, you simply select "register" on the unit, then read off a key code from the display and enter it into the UuVol website. This site can also be used to add streaming services such as Rhapsody and Pandora to the NP30, and you can set up and manage subscriptions to these via the UuVol portal.

Talking of internet connections, the Cambridge can also be linked to your home network via either Wi-Fi or wired Ethernet; and it offers front and rear USB sockets for connection to portable memory devices.



THE TEST MUSIC



TCHAIKOVSKY
Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique'
Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra / Dmitri Kitaenko
Oehms Classics Ⓕ SACD OC666

This big, dynamic recording of the *Pathétique* puts the Cambridge Audio through its paces.

PERFORMANCE

While the Wi-Fi connection is undoubtedly convenient, as is so often the case with devices of this kind I found the wired Ethernet much more reliable in my listening room, which is surrounded by an ever-growing number

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of neighbouring wireless networks. Using the UuVol app on an iPad, the system was just a bit too willing to drop the connection and spend a moment or two hunting for the player, and over time I think that may become annoying. Things are much more solid with the NP30 connected to the router using a wired connection.

The system will also handle a wide range of locally stored streaming music formats when connected via a router to either a home computer or a network-attached storage (NAS) device: almost all the bases are covered, with uncompressed WAV/PCM or FLAC files up to 96kHz/24-bit, AIFF files up to 48kHz and compressed WMA, MP3, AAC and Ogg Vorbis files at up to 320kbps.

In fact, the only major omissions, neither of which are uncommon at this or higher price levels, are support for Apple Lossless or files at higher than 96kHz: a number of transcoding workarounds are available to address the first point and, as yet, relatively little super-high-resolution music is available.

However, two points to note here: the first being that Cambridge Audio says a wireless connection is required to support 24-bit files; the second that, in common with most current streaming client hardware, the NP30 doesn't support gapless playback – it treats each file as a separate entity and there's a noticeable gap between them. It's really only a problem where tracks flow into one another, as they may in opera or oratorio sets; most modern recordings have a track per movement or section and the "gap" may not be too obvious.

In common with other Cambridge Audio products, the NP30 is solidly built – although the lack of mechanical parts or power amplification means it's quite a lightweight – and has good audio engineering within: the digital-to-analogue conversion is from Wolfson and selected components are used elsewhere in the audio chain. It may be inexpensive but it still feels solid and reliable. All of which completes a network player with more than enough performance to keep the owners of modest-to-midrange audio systems happy. Yes, the NP30 sounds a little on the "bright and light" side when compared with rather more expensive streaming client solutions and it could do with rather more weight and substance in the bass when playing really large-scale orchestral works. But there's no denying the pep and vitality of the sound or the insight it lends to performances.

Voices and instruments have fine character, and there's no shortage of atmosphere and ambience, especially when you're playing higher-resolution files. What's more, the Cambridge is also just about smooth enough to make even low bit-rate radio stations listenable. But it really thrives on the likes of the BBC 320kbps AAC stream or some of the European stations using similar bit-rates.

The UuVol iOS app is the icing on the cake, making the NP30 much more enjoyable to use – the unit's own blue-on-black dot-matrix display isn't great and proves tricky to read across the room. Using that app completes what is definitely a cost-effective and highly competent package that's likely to find many buyers.

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO SONATA NP30

Type Network music player
Price £400
Inputs Wi-Fi, Ethernet, two USB
Outputs Analogue stereo, optical/electrical digital
Other connections 12V trigger
Audio formats supported WAV 16-24 bit/32-96kHz, FLAC 16-24 bit 32-96kHz, AIFF 16 bit 32-48kHz, Windows Media Audio 32-320kbps, MP3 16-320kbps AAC, HE AAC and AAC+ 16-320kbps, OGG Vorbis 32-320kbps
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SUPER AUDIO CORNER

A closer look at, and listen to, some recent high-definition recordings



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Nils Anders Mortensen *pf*
2L Ⓕ ③ (② SACD + BD)
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This new recording of Olav Anton Thommesen's song-cycle offers the choice of 5.1-channel DTS-HD Master Audio, 96kHz/24-bit PCM, downloadable 96kHz/24-bit FLAC or MP3 on a single Blu-ray disc, accompanied by a two-disc hybrid SACD set offering 5.1-channel or stereo DSD, or CD-quality stereo.

The multichannel versions are clearly the ones to have: while the formidable voice of mezzo Marianne Beate Kielland is placed before us, centre stage in the sound field, the piano is behind the listener, covered by the rear microphones, and resonances within Sofienberg Church are also picked up by the front left and right channels. It makes for an unusually enveloping but slightly unsettling listen.



BEETHOVEN

Septet, Op 20. Sextet, Op 71
Schauroun Ensemble Berlin
Tudor Ⓕ SACD TUDOR7146

Whether in multichannel SACD or stereo, rather than go for the ultra-close-up approach, with every instrument seemingly spotlit, this disc from the Swiss-based Tudor label sits back a bit, allowing a better view of the entirety of the two works here.

That's not to say the recordings lack detail – far from it – but there's a lovely smoothness to the sound, which combines with fine dynamics and a nicely open ambience, especially in multichannel.



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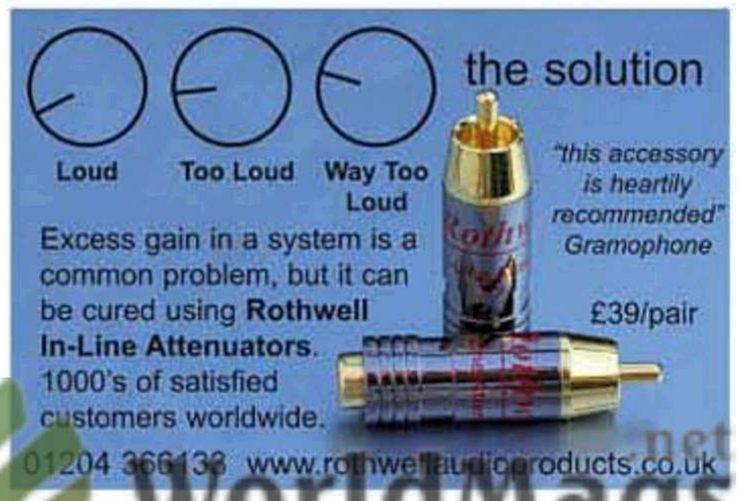
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BOSTON ACOUSTICS A 25

A baby speaker with a very grown-up sound

The combination of European design and solid engineering looks set to put Boston Acoustics back on the world map, says **James Vesey**



Loudspeakers are strange things: in an audio world where electronics products tend to sell equally well worldwide, the speaker market still draws its battle lines on strict geographical grounds. Brands that sell in huge numbers in the USA can remain all but invisible here in Europe. French and German speakers also tend to be popular in their home countries but less so beyond national borders. And in other markets there's still that hankering for "the British sound", although no one seems really clear what that involves.

That brings us to Boston Acoustics, which has had an on/off relationship with the UK market. It was founded at the end of the '70s in Peabody, Massachusetts, and, as well as producing a range of home-use speakers, has a huge business supplying OEM drive units to the car industry in the States, in particular GM's Dodge and Chevrolet, and Chrysler's Jeep. And although the company has also fed interesting models into the worldwide speaker markets over the years, this time it has carried out a major rethink of its range. Since 2005 Boston has been part of D&M Holdings, the parent company of Denon, Marantz and McIntosh (among others). Now the new A-Series has emerged, taking its name from one of the company's most celebrated speaker line-ups of the past – and it's the product of extensive input from a European-led design and engineering team.

Among the talents deployed are those of Marantz Brand Ambassador Ken Ishiwata and consultant Karl-Heinz Fink, whose work is behind a surprisingly large number of speakers currently on the market. Together they're targeting the conversion of Boston Acoustic from a US–market brand to a global one, building on the company's engineering expertise while boosting global appeal.

It isn't hard to appreciate the effects this work has had on the little A 25 speakers we have here, at £200 one step up from the entry-level in a range that has as its flagship the amazing €20,000 (£17,500)-a-pair A-Xperience floorstanders shown at the Munich High End Show back in May.

BOSTON ACOUSTICS A 25

Type Standmount/bookshelf speaker
Price £200/pr
Drive units 25mm Kortec soft-dome tweeter, 13cm ceramic/glass fibre polymer woofer
Sensitivity 87dB/1W/1m
Impedance 8 ohms
Recommended amplifier power 10-150W
Finishes High gloss black, satin cherry, white
Dimensions (HxWxD) 27.1x18.3x22.5cm
Made by Boston Acoustics, Peabody, MA, USA
Distributed by D&M Audiovisual Ltd, First Floor, Imperial House, 4-10 Donegall Square East, Belfast BT1 5HD
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PERFORMANCE

This may be a conventional-looking two-way speaker, using a 25mm soft-dome tweeter and a 13cm mid/bass driver in a reflex-ported enclosure standing just 27cm tall, but the quality of fit and finish is impressive for a speaker at this price. Whether in high gloss black, white or satin cherry finishes, its good looks are well set-off by the use of invisible magnetic fixings for the grilles and the textured finish of the front baffle.

Also of interest is the woofer design: it uses a ceramic/glass fibre polymer construction and a Deep Channel Design to deliver more bass from relatively low-powered amplifiers. In fact, the A 25s can be used with as little as 10W but will handle amps of up to 150W.

Most striking of all, however, is the way the A 25s perform: this is an unusually direct, honest and capable speaker for this kind of money, and what little it lacks in outright bass extension (as you'd expect from so compact a design), it more than makes up for with its definition, speed and overall balance.

Give these speakers a little breathing space at the rear to let those ports work and put them on solid stands or hefty shelves, and they will communicate the music in a manner that's almost all about control and poise but with plenty of brio and verve thrown in to keep the music attractive and involving.

They're fast enough to handle even large dynamic swings, have sufficient weight to make a convincing job of even large symphonic works – at least in small to medium rooms – and do that clever trick of combining sufficient treble openness to convey the space and air in a recording with a sweetness that ensures shriek or spit never become a problem.

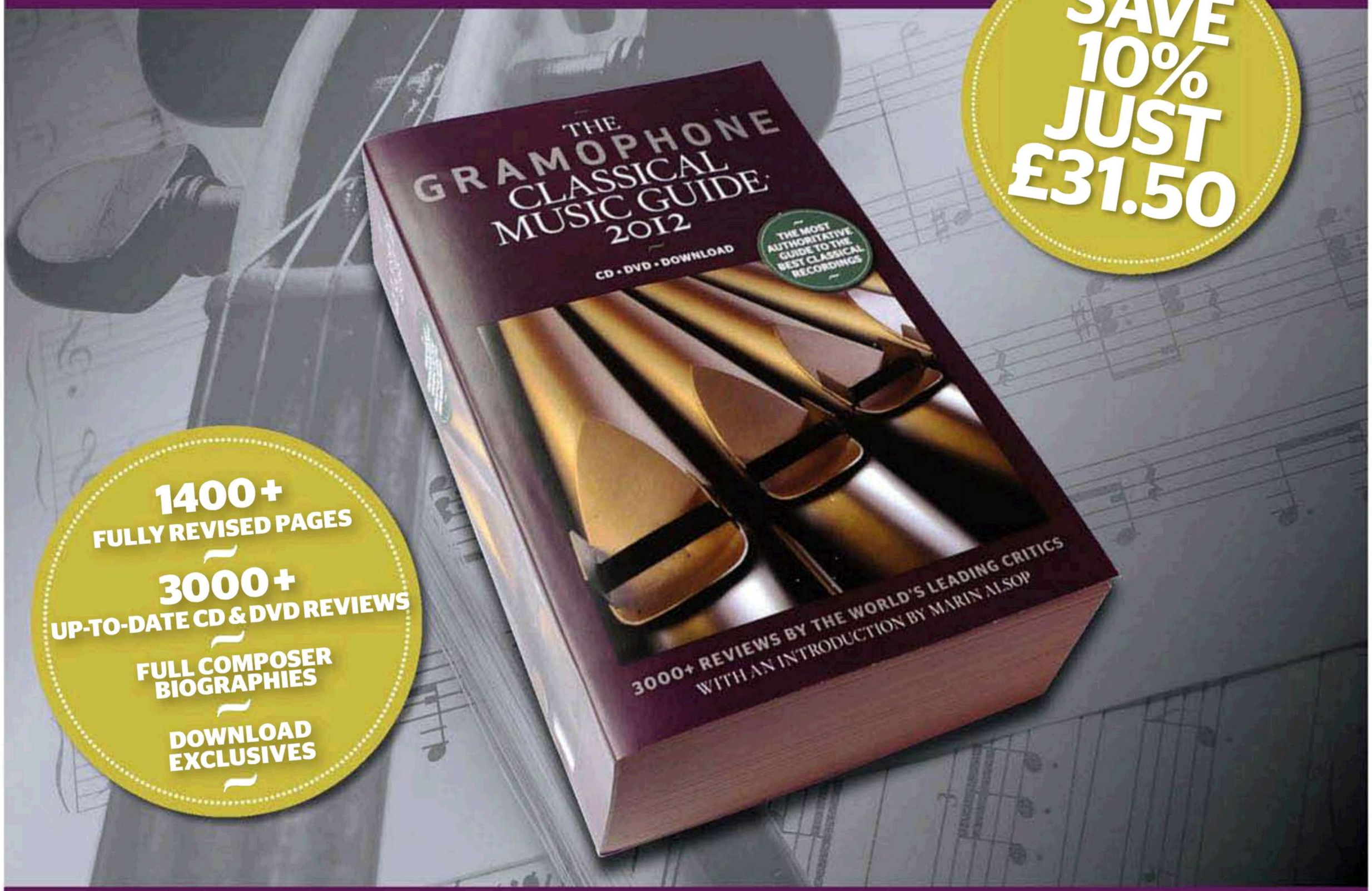
The A 25 is a more than capable rival for established speakers around the £200 mark, and its easy-going presentation, allied to a healthy dose of excitement, looks likely to win it many fans. On this showing, it seems the design team behind Boston's new A-Series really are on to something good.



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My Music

Pianist and singer-songwriter **Tori Amos** has travelled colourful byways en route to her new classically inspired song-cycle



I'd been playing the piano and composing since I was two-and-a-half when, at five, I was accepted into the Peabody Conservatory. I soon realised that my calling was to be a composer, but it was made very clear to me that this was a boys' club – you don't say Beethoven, Brahms, Amy Beach…This was the 1960s and women were burning their bras; I couldn't get into one, much less burn one, but I thought, "I'm not going to play somebody else's music for the rest of my life."

Before my mother married my father, a minister, she worked in a record store in North Carolina. Her tastes – Fats Waller, Cole Porter, all the musicals – and the pop music that my brother and sister would play all seeped in while I was at the Peabody.

It was tricky trying to negotiate my future. My father wanted me to be an organist and write church music but I thought that's as bad as going to a nunnery. I wanted to build sonic cathedrals of my own, from a woman's perspective. I pretty much got kicked out of the Peabody and, at 13, I turned pro and played clubs in Georgetown – my father chaperoned me. By 15 I was playing five nights a week in a Washington lobby bar – a mix of contemporary music and my own.

Then, at 21, I moved to LA, where I travelled away from the classical path. I'd been sending my own demos to record companies but, after seven years, I capitulated and opened myself up to a more commercial expression. If I had one more person knock over their beer on the piano at the Marriott, I was going to sling it in their face!

I did a bomb record with Atlantic and tried to get them to drop me, but they wouldn't. It took four years to develop "Little Earthquakes" and that's when I returned to the piano. "Night of Hunters" is my most classical project. When DG approached me last year and said, "What about a 21st-century song-cycle based on classical themes?" I thought, "Can I pick my head off the floor and then respond?" It's not a small task and if you get it wrong you get it really wrong. I'm aware of the purists who will think I'm touching a sacred thing, but I'm more interested in how the project will be viewed in a hundred years' time.

'I said to the composers' spirits, "If you want to be involved, you'll show me"'

When I toured Europe last year I kept hearing stories about how people's lives had changed overnight. So I thought, if it's too loud, turn it up – let's do a song-cycle that starts at dusk and ends at dawn. Song-cycles work on the microcosm/macrocosm theory – so we have two people in a break-up and the "Shattering" as he walks out, and then through the night there is this psychological process. Tori meets Annabelle, a shape-shifting creature of nature who encourages her to collect fragments from her past. My 12-year-old daughter, Natashya, sings Annabelle – she and I have this really creative relationship.

At the start, I said to the spirits of all the classical composers: "If you want to be involved in this 21st-century expression, you'll show me." Some – Mozart and Beethoven – were close by the whole time, but I couldn't make it work. Handel came close but Chopin stepped in at the final hour (in "Cactus Practice") as did Debussy (in "Carry"). Another guiding light was Stravinsky who pushed me to review his work. I listened endlessly to classical music, getting a sense of another sonic architect's way. When I was incorporating classical themes, it was the Schubert (in "Star Whisperer") that came first. Once that nine-minute piece was locked in, the others began to flow.

With the Granados piece ("Fearlessness"), I thought the story would lead us to Spain but I got pushed by the piece for it to be on the water, and for it to go to the New World and then back to the Old World. I would argue with the Nine Muses, but they said: "We're there for you, there are things you don't yet know." I finished the piece and then found out that Granados had visited the New World and was on his way back to Spain when his boat went down. He was rescued, but he saw his wife drowning and in true fearlessness dove into the water. They both died.

"Night of Hunters", scored for voice, piano, string quartet and woodwind, is released by DG on September 19



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